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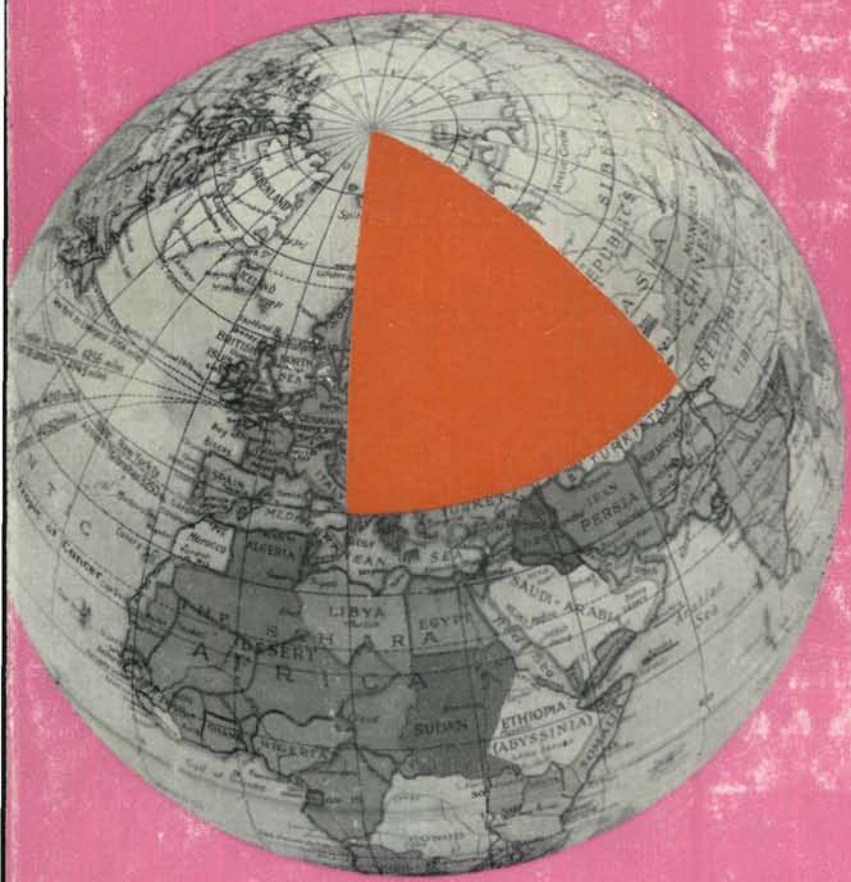


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# SURVEY

A Journal of Soviet and East European Studies

**No. 55** **April 1965**

**Editor: Walter Z. Laqueur** **Associate Editor: Leo Labedz**

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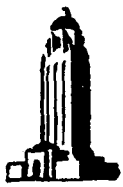

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# THE CASE OF LADISLAV MNACKO

*Frank Osvald*

IN Czechoslovakia it is still difficult to call a spade a spade. Stalinism was unmentionable until 1962, since it was still practised; now its surviving features are pursued in endless polemics, but the debate is conducted through euphemisms. We write about the 'consequences of the period of the cult of personality' and about 'overcoming the consequences, etc.'; the purges appear as 'distortions of legality', civil abuse of power as 'administrative methods' or, more quaintly, 'voluntarism'. Since even the most outspoken critics resort to this dehydrated vocabulary, the appearance of a full-blooded evocation of those years and their surviving miseries was bound to come as a shock. This as much as its candour accounts for the overwhelming impact of *Delayed Reports* by the Slovak author, journalist, and veteran communist Ladislav Mnacko.[1]

That such a book could appear in Czechoslovakia at all seemed incredible even in 1964. 'At first, my heart seemed to stop beating,' runs a reply to a 'Book of the Year' enquiry by the central writers' journal *Literarni Noviny* (19 December 1964), 'so unbelievable seemed the daring of the author and the publishers'. The work was a record best-seller, and copies have long been a black market commodity. It made the author a public hero and, briefly, the centre of an international *succès de scandale*. Mnacko came to be regarded by many inside and outside Czechoslovakia as a symbol of resistance, spokesman of the intellectual revolt against the party, as a revisionist theoretician and, for good measure, a Slovak nationalist fighting 'Prague colonialism'. The book attracted considerable attention abroad and was issued by an enterprising West German publisher in a pirated (and mutilated) edition. The result was an *affaire* Mnacko, which dragged on until the end of 1964 and gave wide currency to a picture of the author as a Slovak Pasternak, victimised by Prague censorship.

In fact Mnacko is none of these things and he has consistently protested against 'misinterpretation' of his position and motives. He is a communist and party man of long standing and impeccable orthodoxy, who has never shown the least doubt in the party's fitness to rule. This even sets him apart from many of his colleagues on the cultural front. Mnacko is a rare example—rarer in Czechoslovakia than anywhere else—of a deeply loyal communist who is also a fierce seeker after truth and a passionate moralist. Nor is *Delayed Reports* in any sense an opposition manifesto. Though the author has been renowned for his

[1] Ladislav Mnacko, *Opozdene Reportaze* (Praha, 1964). The Czech version has been used, since the Slovak original could not be obtained.

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clashes with authority, these have not concerned the present work, which has never been attacked by party spokesmen. True, parts of it have been subject to censorship—or self-censorship by the author—but this does not make it any the less remarkable that publication of the book actually appears to have been backed by the party. It was published in book form after parts of it had been serialised in *Kulturny Zivot*, organ of the Slovak Writers Union, under the imprint of the State Publishing House of Political Literature—according to the author 'actually the party itself' (*KZ*, 25 July 1964). A total of 300,000 copies have been sold, again according to the author's testimony (*KZ*, 12 July 1964, *LN*, 21 November 1964). Last May he received one of the annual State Prizes for literature, awarded by the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Nevertheless, by the end of last year, the *affaire* Mnacko seems at least temporarily to have put a stop to the author's career and caused a serious setback to the entire liberal movement in Czechoslovakia.

On the face of it, the party's backing of *Delayed Reports* is indeed remarkable. A collection of recognisably authentic case-histories covering a period from the purge trials to the early sixties, it is the first work of its kind in Czechoslovakia; and in its way unique in that it presents Stalinism not merely as a conspiracy of a few individuals, but as a general way of life. In contrast to e.g. Solzhenitsyn, whose *Ivan Denisovich* clearly belongs to the past, Mnacko's stories demonstrate how the Stalinist past conditions the present. The scene is for the most part the daily environment of factories, bureaucracy and, in the central episode, the courtroom. The physical and social atmosphere compels the reader to draw parallels with his own current experience.

Mnacko's analysis is outstanding also in that he tackles—though he doesn't solve—the problem of responsibility and moral complicity. The book is a self-indictment of the author as much as an indictment of the system. This sense of involvement in the evils he describes is put forward as the author's motive for writing the book: 'These stories are a journalist's *reportage* turned inside out. . . . They came to me while I was travelling, looking for stories, people, ideas—and as the years went by, I found that an idea was pursuing me instead. . . . My desk bent beneath the screams, confessions, the letters of unknown men and women who showed me the mutilated stumps of their pride, their souls, their honour.'

Mnacko feels compelled to testify on behalf of these people and to record the 'psychosis of our age'. It is a duty both of atonement and of warning. The author, too, has abetted the 'cult', had a share in those 'unforgivable years' which have not yet passed into history: 'There would be no point in writing, much less in publishing these stories if it were only as a record and obituary of the past. But the burning issues raised in these pages are not, alas, a matter of history; they have grown into the present through the lives of the people

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concerned and also through the force of inertia that governs not a few of us today.'

His aim is, first, the truth: '. . . to serve the truth and make it prevail—no one may fear the truth, truth is a threat only when it is suppressed, raped, twisted, coiffeured, clad in nonexisting finery . . .'. And second, justice: 'We all paid our share to the cult of personality, but it must be stated that we didn't all do it with equal intensity. . . . Not all those who violated the law did so because they were naïve, unprepared, solely because of their faith in the party. There were others with unclean intentions and sinister motives, whom the law must call to account for their deeds.'

THESE threads are tied together in the central story, *Garden of Pain*. It is a courtroom drama of a familiar kind: not a purge trial, but a humdrum affair, staged to resolve a local failure of bread distribution. Local bakeries in a mining area have been abolished and replaced by central bread factories, supplied by central flour mills; the system keeps breaking down through defective organisation, an example of those vicious circles still wearily familiar to all Czechs and Slovaks. In a specially hard-hit community, the miners' wives stage a riot of sufficient dimensions to necessitate central party intervention; the regional party secretary, 'a man of vast stupidity', who is really responsible, must therefore produce a scapegoat.

The trial of the chosen victim, the manager of the flour mill, also conforms to pattern. He is found guilty of sabotage on the basis of fabricated evidence on such matters as that he had his official car repainted, used it for private trips, and was rude to the charwoman; he is also said to be an 'inveterate enemy of the working class,' and because of this, his 'profile', he is condemned to death. Since the purpose of the exercise has been achieved, however, the sentence is commuted to twenty years' hard labour.

The chief actors in the drama can be identified as still living and working officials. The author himself is present as a young reporter who notes the flimsiness of the evidence but lets himself be persuaded by the proceedings and hails the verdict: 'I wrote . . . not so much about the trial as the wider context. The defendant was a dangerous individual, capable of the basest actions; he hated the working class, was arrogant, regarded the charwoman as less than human, he thought he could do as he pleased. A cynical, clever lawyer, an unrepentant criminal. The verdict was hard, but just.' But even he is relieved when the death sentence is commuted.

After this, the author-reporter is first abused by his unpersuaded friends, then feared and shunned—he has become 'one of them'. He still preserves his faith, throughout the Slansky trials and the purges, and only starts to doubt when his own close friends disappear. By then a prominent journalist, he meets the cynicism and the fear of the great

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at first hand, and his faith in the party's justice is exchanged for a determination to see that at least one miscarriage of justice is put right. He intervenes, unsuccessfully ('Do you want to be put inside, too?' asks the minister of justice), and the story follows the further progress of the prisoner's calvary, involving four retrials with sentences from seven months to eight years. The eight-year verdict is handed down by a judge of whom the author says 'and this man, while these lines are written, still sits on the bench of the Supreme Court in Prague'. The last obstacle to final rehabilitation is the president of the Supreme Court, who tells the defendant in 1963: 'Why, man, you ought to be thankful you didn't get more than you've served!'[2]

The prisoner's rehabilitation, which at last rewards this superhuman persistence, is also the author's. His story is a confession, an act of atonement: 'I haven't reported these events for the manager's sake. I wrote the story for myself and about myself. . . . When they at last set him free I, too, was freed of a heavy burden of guilt.'

The mechanisms of judicial terror and interrogation necessarily take up a large part of the book. On the reader, too, these accounts have a liberating effect—never before has such plain language been spoken in Czechoslovakia. 'They gave me the file at the airport,' says the judge, referring to the original trial, when interviewed later by the author. 'I had an hour in which to read it on the plane. At the end of the file was the verdict and the sentence.' This is how things were done; the reader is left in no doubt that many of the practitioners are still entrenched in party and state, hiding behind the smokescreen of official clichés about 'voluntarist legality'.

The book ranges over other fields, too—party committees, the building sites of some historic 'socialist projects' like the celebrated HUKO steelworks in eastern Slovakia, abandoned as a total failure in the early fifties, and the intricate machinery of the screening and cadre system. From all this one gets an impression of what might be called workaday stalinism—the total administrative and economic chaos, and the permanent need for scapegoats to account for it.

'Here, on the youth-project construction site, everything went smoothly. The important thing wasn't work but parades, flag-hoisting, conferences, and the making of careers. The most important thing, though, were the prohibitions. No wine drinking ('higher cadres' excepted), no making love (higher cadres excepted too), no thinking (higher cadres not excepted), no grumbling over food or working conditions, no reading other than recommended books, no criticism of any functionary whatsoever. . . .'

The bureaucratic nightmare is often brilliantly rendered, as well as the latent traits of fascism, as in the story of the Jewish communist girl

[2] Josef Urvalek, state prosecutor at the trials of Milada Horakova and the Slansky group, resigned as president of the Supreme Court in March 1963, officially for reasons of health.

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(*Clara*) and her fifteen years wait for permission to marry a man she met abroad in 1947; the years being spent in endless interrogations always culminating in the loaded question: 'And are you proud of your relatives in Israel?' The case-histories are not presented as 'certain errors' of 'certain individuals'. Mnacko demonstrates a tightly-knit system working to no fixed rules except the over-riding imperative of opportunism: each member of this tribal structure must look after his own skin and find a suitable victim for each new calamity. There is no single, identifiable conspiracy against the people, but a universal tangle of intrigue with everyone covering up for someone and passing the buck to someone else. And again, even though the brutality of the means has been curbed, chaos and the ethos of the jungle can still be identified as the ruling social force.

NEVERTHELESS, *Delayed Reports* is not the crushing indictment of Czechoslovak communism it would appear from this account to be. Closer reading suggests that the party had good reasons to back its publication, just as Khrushchev had to back Solzhenitsyn's in November 1962. True, *Ivan Denisovich* deals with a past phase of Soviet history, thus serving Khrushchev's point that stalinism as such should be considered a closed chapter. Mnacko's picture is of a battlefield where a rearguard action is still in progress. But this battle, as Mnacko sees it, is not between doctrines of government, but between good and evil men. The author's heroes provide the key to his political message. They are mostly a little larger than life and a little too good to be true, almost like the socialist-realist 'positive' heroes of old. The manager in *Garden of Pain* is not just innocent of the charge, he is a paragon of innocence, in whose conduct repeated vindictive investigations fail to find the least flaw. But the great majority of managers are not like that at all and never were (and Mnacko knows it)—they meet their targets and earn their bonuses by fiddling and they do use official cars for private and even for shady purposes. When a scapegoat is called for, there is no need for intrigue; a close inspection of the books usually suffices.

This holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for most of the book's characters. Mnacko's heroes and victims are on a superhuman scale, the conflicts suspiciously neat. In *Two Friends* the situation borders on Victorian melodrama. One, wartime collaborator, post-war profiteer and hardened reactionary, escapes to the West and returns as an 'agent'; the other, loyal communist, resistance fighter and brilliant engineer, is tricked into letting him stay the night. The communist gets fifteen years for this offence, while the agent returns after an amnesty, and ends up as boss of the firm where the ex-convict is a labourer. . . . Mnacko here obliquely makes a point that he has often stressed, the regime's preference for former fascists and collaborators as 'more reliable' than genuine communists; yet he also implies that those thousands of 'traitors' who

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really tried to leave the country or helped others to do so fully deserved their savage sentences and permanent degradation. Where 'good' communists hold power, on the other hand, they often act as *deus ex machina*, cutting through red tape and releasing long-term convicts at a moment's notice (*The Witness*). On this uplifting and improbable note the book ends.

One need not suspect the author of having tailored his truth. Saints do happen and he may have been fortunate in knowing them. He may also, as a legitimate stratagem, have stressed their virtues in order to relieve the squalor of his picture. Yet, making all possible allowances, the fact remains that Mnacko's approach makes nonsense of his determination to get at the truth, because his case-histories, for all the unmistakable realism of the background, are all exceptions to the rule. The tragedy of Czechoslovak stalinism consists much less in the 'good' communists' blind loyalty to the villains, than in the fact that time-servers and opportunists were—and are—in the overwhelming majority. There have never been many genuine communists in the swollen Czechoslovak party, which from the very first relied on corrupt and criminal elements, the dregs of the post-war upheaval, in its struggle for power. Communism in Czechoslovakia has for the most part been dominated by parasites. This also holds for the writers and intellectuals. Few of them were, like Mnacko, duped by their faith, since the majority had no faith. They are survivors in the curious position of leading the attack on the old guard without quite being able to part company with it.

The evidence for all this can be found in *Delayed Reports*, yet the author ignores it as a possible reply to his own agonised question: 'How did it happen? Something mysterious, irrational, unspeakable was taking place. . . . What was it? Hysteria? Mass delusion? How can we explain these things?' The question is rhetorical, a cry of anguish that is its own answer. For Mnacko the evil remains mysterious and irrational, since he never so much as touches on social and economic phenomena and the regime's power structure as a possible source. Stalinism can thus only be understood on the psychopathological plane ('psychosis' is one of the author's favourite expressions)—a conclusion that indirectly exonerates the present old guard, fighting grimly to preserve their power structure intact. By the same token, Mnacko betrays the real martyrs, such as the former foreign minister Clementis (hanged with Slansky in 1952), or the poet Novomesky who survived to share the author's literature prize last year. Mnacko admires these men—he pays tribute to Novomesky in his preface—yet according to the logic of his book they are traitors. These 'bourgeois nationalists' opposed the economic lunacy of the first Five-Year Plan and the corruption of the regime which had become the instrument of Soviet exploitation. As premature anti-stalinists, they lack the unconditional loyalty which sets the pattern for the author's 'positive heroes'. The political message of *Delayed Reports* can be read as a revival of the old mystique of the

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party that can do no wrong—'Who to trust?' asked Klement Gottwald after the arrest of Slansky. 'Trust the party, comrades.'

MNACKO is candid about his own former faith in the party mystique. 'I, too, was a stalinist,' he told West German reporters last November. 'When the revolution came, we were intoxicated. Speaking for my own generation, I suppose we might be called communist catholics' (*LN*, 21 November 1964). In the preface to *Delayed Reports* he describes his awakening: 'The 20th congress shocked me to the core . . . I resisted the revelation but the evidence was incontrovertible. There and then I settled mercilessly with my naive faith.' Both statements are doubtless sincere, yet they are not the whole truth. Mnacko's faith is still naive; but it is not, and perhaps never has been, political. His dominant trait as a writer is a moralist's passion, a dedication to the good and the true. This he saw embodied in the party; even today he accepts party authority unquestioningly as a principle, in the sense that he never opposes it as such, though he has challenged its manifestations more forcibly than anyone else in Czechoslovakia.

The break with the past came with dramatic force at the second Writers Congress in 1956, where Mnacko exclaimed: 'I shall never lie again'. This avowal (Mnacko was one of the few who did not recant subsequently) cost him several years in the wilderness. During the neo-stalinist period, 1957–1961, when he held no public post, he built up a solid if uncontroversial reputation as a novelist, mostly in the 'safe' themes of Nazi occupation and resistance (*Death Calls itself Engelchen*, his greatest previous success both as book and film, *A Graveyard of Dead Germans, The Dusty Road's End*). Since the thaw of 1962, however, Mnacko has won an extraordinary authority as the guardian of old-fashioned virtues—conscience, honesty, human dignity. One of the earliest manifestos of the new anti-stalinism was his article 'Conscience': 'The worst of it is that we have struck the word not only from our vocabulary, but from our hearts and actions . . . Conscience became a bourgeois survival, a non-marxist, idealist term, a religious fiction. But we shall resurrect that proscribed word. We shall not allow the psychosis of shamelessness to continue' (*KZ*, 5 January 1963).

This was a new voice, and it has consistently gained in power. The Slovak thaw has throughout been more radical and courageous than its Czech counterpart. Borne on a tide of resurgent nationalism, aided perhaps by the legacy of a genuine revisionist movement, whose members were the first rehabilitated purge victims, the Slovaks fought for the revival of those civilised values which in sophisticated Prague it seemed almost indecent to mention. While the Czechs debated Kafka, alienation, and dialectics, the Slovaks paid public homage to the hanged martyrs and blamed the then sitting premier Siroky for their fate (*Pravda*, 3 June 1963). Mnacko, though he rarely wrote on political subjects, became an outstanding figure in the revival as commentator and later

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editor of *Kulturny Zivot*, the most controversial of the literary journals.[2] It has been the favourite target of the old guard and of President Novotny's personal wrath. The central committee's notorious 'Statement on the Mission and Situation of the Cultural Journals' of April 1964, though apparently provoked by an interview with Gyorgy Lukacs published in *Literarny Noviny*, concentrated its heaviest fire on the Slovak journal. The cultural press as a whole was taken to task for criticising the party line and 'giving it conflicting interpretations'; *KZ* was found guilty on the graver charge of 'mistrust in the party, denial of its leading role and of the hegemony of the working class'. The chief offenders named were the (Czech) philosopher Ivan Svitak, later dismissed from his post at the Academy of Sciences and expelled from the party, and the economist Evzen Loebl, a co-defendant at the original Slansky trial.

The article for which Loebl was attacked, 'Dogmatism in Economic Thought', does in fact raise this issue: 'If we accept the absolute authority of a given view, it follows that we accept the absolute authority of the originator or propagator of that view. Therefore we recognise the existence of infallible individuals and accept their ideas as the arbiter of the thoughts of everyone else' (*KZ*, 28 September 1963). The editorial board, after several weeks of heart-searching, replied with a manifesto. 'Nothing would be more comfortable, nor more irresponsible and immoral, than contritely to accept the criticism.' The editors considered that their policy had been 'correct in essentials' and accepted full responsibility for the journal's contents and contributors: 'We cannot and will not dissociate ourselves from the criticised authors . . . Our pens and our tasks remain, and there also remains our moral obligation as socialist journalists' (*KZ*, 1 May 1964).

The style as well as the matter betray Mnacko's touch. There is an apparent contradiction between this proclamation of the paper's right to defy the party, and Mnacko's subservience to it, as shown in *Delayed Reports*. But it is at least doubtful whether the dichotomy would occur to Mnacko himself. Like Robert Havemann in East Berlin, Mnacko is convinced that the socialist order must give the citizen at least as much freedom as does the capitalist. Unlike Havemann, he does not reach this view by analysis, but through moral conviction. Mnacko is one to whom, in the words of Keats, 'the miseries of the world are misery, and will not let them rest'.

THE most noticeable outward sign of this is Mnacko's choice of words. He is not a great writer, rather a journalist inclined to pathos and

[2] The influence of the literary journals in Czechoslovakia is a unique phenomenon, since they represent almost the sole vehicle of debate in a country where the political press is still very tightly controlled. The combined circulation of the four leading reviews—*Literarni Noviny* (organ of the Czechoslovak Writers Union), *Kulturny Zivot* (Slovak Writers Union), *Kulturni Tvorba* (recently transferred to the party), and the monthly *Plamen*—is close to 300,000 copies, readership exceeds one million. *Kulturny Zivot* is printed in 30,000 copies but read by ten times that number.

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occasionally cliché.[4] But it is never party cliché; and he does call a spade a spade. Even a Czech lyrical poet can write about 'joy like a stuffed humming bird fluttering over the violations of socialist legality' (*LN*, 1 June 1963); while the heretical philosopher Svitak, in order to convey that a scholar ought to say what he means, writes that one must never 'pretend that the spirit of the profoundness of science exists where the abyss of senselessness is yawning' (quoted in *Rude Pravo*, 3 April 1964, as an example of 'revisionist blabbering'). Mnacko has revived words like right and wrong, good and evil, and the rule of law. He calls the stalinist system 'the jungle' and the old guard 'Comrade Fear',[5] the personality cult 'mass sycophancy'; and he writes about the 'criminal idiocies, the monstrosities . . . we committed daily' (*Delayed Reports*, p. 90).

This freedom from cant is not merely verbal. Mnacko attacks problems with the same directness and indignation, often before they are considered ripe for public discussion. He probes, moreover, some of the sorest regions of the system, such as the use of informers—'those beings beyond morality, with their shady past and even shadier present' (*KZ*, 8 August 1964)—political or class criteria for the selection of students, industrial managers, etc., and the source of all these evils, the cadre-system, with its secret files on the class-origin, political profile, and suspicious features of all citizens, and its abuse by irresponsible, corrupt, or vindictive functionaries. Mnacko has made this social canker peculiarly his own concern. At the Writers' Congress of 1956 he proposed making a bonfire of all cadre-certificates; and he has frequently returned to the problem since. It also forms the theme of, in some respects, the most remarkable and certainly the most controversial of the *Delayed Reports* in the version published as a serial in *Kulturny Zivot* during 1963.

This story, *Night Conversation*, differs from all the others in that it hasn't a communist 'positive hero' as chief character, but is about an anti-hero, an outcast of a particularly undesirable kind: a former member of the Czechoslovak armed forces in Britain and one of the thousands handicapped by the label 'westerner', and by the fact that they stood in the way of stalinist military history. *Night Conversation* is actually a monologue, delivered by this outsider to a chance companion: 'I am a disease, a cadre-infection, wherever I go they shadow me and watch who associates with me . . . If you sit down beside me you'll come under suspicion of associating with a dangerous individual,

[4] On the purely literary level there have been a number of works interpreting the moral features of Czechoslovak communism. The most famous, Skvorecky's *The Cowards*, which approaches the problem indirectly through an account of wartime occupation mentality, was withdrawn after a brief and scandalous appearance in 1958; most recent writers, however, refer to the subject (Ladislav Bublik's *The Spine*, published in 1963, is among the most impressive). But no one before Mnacko set himself the task of explaining stalinism as such.

[5] From a tape-recorded interview made by a reporter of the Danish Radio in July 1964.

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that individual is me and I'm dangerous because I've served in His Majesty's Royal Air Force, rank of Flight Lieutenant . . . '

There is nothing very ennobling about this outburst; it is rancorous and almost squalid, like the man himself, soured by the long years as a social cripple. What especially embitters him is the ease with which former fascists, and even members of the paramilitary Gardist organisation of the Slovak quisling-state, made the transition to communism and achieved a 'cadre-profile' much superior to his own. He has often thought about cheating the cadre files. 'I've thought of covering my tracks, keeping quiet about my war record and getting myself a new past as a Slovak fascist. I might have got hold of a Gardist's card somewhere and faked it—but they'd have found out . . . Better still, I ought to have joined the fascists and escaped afterwards, that would have been some sort of insurance . . . But I'm a fool, I beat those swine wherever I could . . . '

After a series of interrogations and faced with the threat of a trial, the old airman takes a desperate step; he half-blackmails one of his interrogators, in whom he has discovered a high official of the former fascist state police, into getting him certified as a mental case. Since then, he has been allowed to spend his days in a parasitic limbo, kept alive by a minute pension, a constant embarrassment to his family and friends and under permanent supervision, but protected from the worst. He is a leper, condemned only to watch 'what a mess you're making of it . . . Alright, I'm just a reactionary "westerner" . . . But show me just one human being who isn't fed up, intimidated, frightened, just one who's never been falsely accused of the basest deeds, never been under suspicion, who's never been brutally kicked, insulted and hurt! show me just one, and I'll tear up my mental card... I'm a cripple, a former western airman, I don't know why I'm telling you all this. I suppose I have to tell someone or I'd really go crazy . . . ' (*KZ*, 8 June 1963).

This story is not contained in the book version of *Delayed Reports*, and it can be said to form the starting point for the 'Mnacko Affair'. The author has given conflicting accounts of what appears to be a clear case of either censorship or self-censorship. In one of his latest references to the matter he states that he 'didn't regard the story as good enough' (along with four others) for inclusion in the final selection (*KZ*, 12 July 1964). This is not, however, a very convincing argument; Mnacko's figures don't tally, since he states in the same article that he had originally written sixteen *Reports*, twelve of which appeared in book form. Of those printed in *Kulturny Zivot*, the Slovak party organ *Pravda*, and the monthly *Slovenske Pohlady*, however, *Night Conversation* was the only item to be dropped. Moreover, during an earlier debate, Mnacko answered a query as to why this story had been cut with a reference to the 'comments of older comrades, especially from among the working class, whose opinion that the story constituted an insult to the working people had to be respected' (quoted from *Der Spiegel*, 31/1964).

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*Night Conversation* did in fact arouse an immediate controversy along these lines. Two weeks after it appeared in *KZ*, the journal printed an indignant letter from a reader who, stressing his own working-class and party status, insinuated that Mnacko must be a millionaire's son and condemned the story as 'a slur upon our socialist order' and a 'betrayal of the working class' of which 'even the bitterest enemy of our system would have to feel ashamed' (*KZ*, 22 June 1963). The letter was printed together with Mnacko's reply, given in the form of an interview with the paper (of which he was then assistant editor). The author took the opportunity of categorically identifying himself with his work: 'The writer of the letter evidently fears for our socialist achievements . . . Well, I fear for them too . . . and I'll tell him the reason more directly than I did in the story: Show me just one man who isn't fed up, intimidated, insulted—peasant, worker, scientist, politician, engineer—show me, if you can find one . . . ! *Q*: This, one may say, is the message of all your *Delayed Reports*? *A*: Yes. I wanted to show what our vulgar, insensitive cadre-system had done to people . . . and I believe most of our difficulties stem from this . . . I regard the question of the rule of law, not merely in the strictly legal sense, as the most urgent for our society to settle . . . My stories are written as a warning about the monstrosities caused by denying the sovereignty of law and the absence of precise legal norms.' It seems clear that Mnacko not only wished to affirm what he had written, but to assert explicitly the central part played by this particular story in his total examination of stalinism.

TWO other noteworthy moments appear in this polemic. In one of the questions, the interviewer notes the anxiety of readers lest Mnacko be prevented from printing further instalments in his series. The author confirms this obliquely with a reference to his publisher's contract. *Night Conversation* would be the last story in *KZ*, but 'if I submitted others, I'm sure they would be printed'.—Another question refers to the letter-writer's insinuation that Mnacko's 'slander' would undoubtedly 'win praise in the West'. Mnacko in reply quotes his own celebrated statement from the Slovak Writers Congress a few weeks previously: 'I do not write to be either praised or censured abroad . . . I don't care what Europe, let alone [Radio] Free Europe thinks of me . . .' This was a brave thing to say in view of the current charges by the old guard against writers supplying ammunition 'to our enemies' and particularly to the 'traitors' of Radio Free Europe—charges which, when substantiated, provide one of the few remaining justifications for the use of 'administrative measures'. Mnacko, moreover, had been singled out as the target for just such an attack only a week or so before. This was during a notorious speech by President and party secretary Antonin Novotny in Kosice (Eastern Slovakia), where he lashed out against the intellectuals and the cultural press in a fit of uncontrolled anger: 'Some people have forgotten the basic principles of party rule: they

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try to start discussions about questions which the central committee has plainly stated will be settled within the party . . . Western propaganda is employing all available means to stir up and incite the struggle in the field of culture. Thanks to some communists our enemies abroad are given opportunities to attack the party . . . these people are helping to establish a platform for enemy propaganda' (*Rude Pravo*, 13 June 1963). There follows an unmistakable and vicious personal reference to Mnacko: 'Your loose talk is highly appreciated in the West. "Free Europe" quotes you, all the right-wing reactionary press quotes you, they're pleased that some writers have discovered their "conscience" and are now fighting for democracy and liberty. A few days ago, RFE commented upon recent statements that from now on, the truth would be spoken in Czechoslovakia even at the cost of being abused by RFE . . . Why do you pretend you're bigger than you are? Why do you exaggerate our mistakes, which are minimal, blacken all our achievements and attack the policy of the party? It's hard to believe that you didn't foresee and approve the outcome of all this.'

There could be no doubt that Novotny, who was almost beside himself with fury, was trying to lay down the official line with regard to the intellectuals. (The remarks quoted were considered too emotional for inclusion in the broadcast version of his speech, and even the wording in *Rude Pravo* was edited.) It is therefore all the more remarkable that Mnacko, in repeating the incriminating statement, should deliberately goad the party leader. It is also probable, however, that the author, while reaffirming his position with regard to the problems involved, was induced to present a bowdlerised version of his case histories to the general public three months later. Mnacko took a further precautionary measure: he refused to sanction the translation and distribution of *Delayed Reports* anywhere outside Czechoslovakia, i.e. in the communist orbit as well as in the West. Announcing this step, he referred to the similar decision taken by the West German dramatist Rolf Hochhuth with regard to his controversial play *The Representative*, which may not be published or performed in Eastern Europe. Mnacko explained his attitude later in an open letter to the dramatist: 'I assumed the same standpoint towards foreign editions of my book as you did with regard to your play . . . The reason was my conviction that only a reader who has known the atmosphere and the background of the events described from personal experience, can understand it in the sense in which it was written' (*KZ*, 25 July 1964).

That the work did not remain undiscovered in the West was probably inevitable; but it seems an ironic trick of fate that Mnacko should have provided the test case for the sinister warnings uttered by Novotny and the old guard. For the Western student of communist affairs, the further story of *Delayed Reports* makes cautionary reading. Early last year, the central story, *Garden of Pain*, was reprinted in two instalments by *Deutsche Zeitung* (Düsseldorf, 18–19 January 1964), in a translation

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which the author condemned as biased and inaccurate since it 'suppressed the moral aspects of the case' (*KZ*, 25 July 1964), and with an editorial note presenting Mnacko as a leader of the democratic opposition in Czechoslovakia. Several other journals followed suit, and a West German publisher produced a pirated version of the book, which abundantly confirmed the author's anxiety about misrepresentation. The translator and editor (whose identity the publishers have refused to reveal) altered the book's title to *Prohibited Reports*, using this as subtitle, with the main title adapted from the central story by changing *Garden of Pain* to *The Red Torture Garden*,[6] as was also done in the version printed by the Düsseldorf paper. Two stories were deleted from the original edition, the text was pruned and dramatised throughout, and *Night Conversation* was included. The publishers did not apply for authorisation until the book was almost ready for distribution, and are said to have gone ahead despite the author's refusal. The German edition appeared on the same day as an interview with Mnacko in *Wiener Presse*, where he stated his case against publication abroad. Finally, Hegner-Verlag was induced to withdraw the book; proceedings for damages initiated by the author are still pending at the time of writing.

IN Czechoslovakia, surprisingly enough, these events were not made a pretext for a vendetta against the author. The book was not attacked by official spokesmen and there is no direct evidence of victimisation; last July Mnacko gave a long and outspoken interview to a Danish radio reporter in which he discussed the surviving problems of coercive rule, the role of the intellectuals, and his own future plans, which included a book on the role of the individual in socialist society, the abuse of power and the rule of law. Last November Mnacko took part in a discussion with West German journalists arranged by Radio Bremen. Nevertheless, the affair appears to have brought his career as a crusader for the moral regeneration of Czechoslovak public and social life at least temporarily to a halt. During the discussion in Bremen, he declared that he would not permit any further printings of his work even in Czechoslovakia: '300,000 must be enough' (*LN*, 21 November 1964). About a week later, Mnacko resigned from his editorial post on *Kulturny Zivot* (*KZ*, 28 November 1964). Since then his name has virtually disappeared from its pages.

How far this is due to the author's genuine disgust with what he not unfairly considers ruthless exploitation by Western interests, and how far to pressures from above, it is impossible to determine. *Kulturny Zivot* published a kind of epitaph for its most distinguished contributor

[6] *Der rote Foltergarten*, Hegner-Verlag, Köln, June 1964. The substitution of 'torture' for 'pain' might be excused on the purely formal grounds that the word *muka* in the original covers both meanings. *Pein* would have been the obvious German equivalent, for the phrase (which the author explains in a note) is traditional, with a biblical connotation.

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under the title 'Politics and Literature' (9 January 1965), which surveys the 'cultural-political ball-game' of the past year:

> There was foul play on both sides of the field, though it must be said that the judge was often biased, awarding penalties not against offenders, but against those who played the cleanest game . . . Strangely, it was the fighter-communists who were most often borne from the field. We don't want to enter too deeply into this complicated game, where ideas are treated as a ball to be kicked about . . . behind the scenes and with little regard for fairness.

The speaker (the article is reprinted from a recent Slovak writers conference) makes an interesting point regarding censorship: 'Despite the experience of various colleagues, I would like to make the rather heretical statement, that we in Czechoslovakia enjoy comparatively wide freedom to publish. This is a fact . . . Despite a lot of unpleasant talk, almost everything that was written appeared in print and except for one or two cases, there were no reprisals . . . But there still lies an unfinished task before literature: to record the insults and injuries, the boom in fools, the cult of "cadres" and reliability . . . all the problems inherited from the one big Cult and the thousands of smaller—and worse—ones that blossom and multiply as soon as the rain falls and the sun shines again.'

*Delayed Reports* may prove to be the end of this road rather than the new beginning which the book appeared to herald on its first appearance. Czechoslovak censorship is a peculiar institution; officially it doesn't exist and there is no machinery for its enforcement. In theory, there is nothing to prevent an editor or publisher from printing what he likes, provided he is prepared to face the consequences. Party control depends thus almost entirely on the apparat's ability to pack the key editorial offices, and to take reprisals against offenders. The Mnacko case shows how much this power has been eroded since 1962; it simply wasn't possible to stop *Kulturny Zivot* publishing Mnacko's stories, and once they had appeared, supression of the book or even the printing of a 'nominal' edition would have entailed an intolerable loss of face.

This is one side of the Czechoslovak medal. The other is the corresponding powerlessness and isolation of the opposition which refuses to acknowledge itself as such. The crucial role of the intellectuals, writers and journalists is given by the simple fact that they alone have access to print as a matter of right; but they are borne on the much wider and more practical tide of discontent—though they rarely show awareness of it—that envelops all classes of the population and most sections of the party, and it is this which accounts for the extraordinary popularity of the literary and cultural press. This in turn of course is their surest guarantee against victimisation. The extent to which it is safe to publicise revisionist or liberal ideas depends almost entirely on the consensus obtaining among the intellectuals themselves. This applies to almost all current issues, from the academic debates on dialectics to the

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'revaluation' (in reality, exposure) of communist history, as well as to the campaign for the 'new economic model'. In virtually every case, the arguments put forward contradict the party line on essential points of principle. The liberalisation and decentralisation of the economy, for instance, now formally adopted by the regime, contradicts the entire party programme put forward under Novotny's personal authority at the twelfth congress in December 1962, although this in theory still forms the basis of all official policy.

BUT in fact the running of the country's affairs has changed very little except in outward, and highly publicised, details. The power structure of the regime survives practically intact, despite the scuttling (in September 1963) of its most compromised figures. These have for the most part been replaced by nonentities; the party apparatus as a whole is still packed with Novotny's appointees and reforms within the party structure have been insignificant. The grip of the old guard on the levers of power is as firm as ever.

This applies especially to provincial politics, which however rarely receive national publicity. An exception is provided by a resolution of the district party committee at Usti in Bohemia (4 December 1964), formally in pursuance of the (six months old) 'Statement' of the central committee's Ideological Commission on what is officially termed 'the cultural and artistic front'. The committee makes no bones about freedom of expression: 'The committee will not permit cultural activities which fail to contribute to the education . . . of the working people in the spirit of the party's policy . . .' The resolution condemns a number of plays and films as 'politically and ideologically unsuitable', and they were, therefore, banned; since the same charges, however, can also be made against many radio and television programmes, and even the 'cultural columns of *Rude Pravo*', the committee requests the central organs to take appropriate action: to 're-examine the cadre situation on the cultural front and to replace . . . those unwilling or unable to ensure the party line by ideologically firm cadres devoted to the party and the working class . . . Effective measures must be adopted to strengthen the influence of marxist aesthetics.'

This example of provincial diehardism assumes significance by being reprinted in the internal party journal *Zivot Strany* (1965, no. 1), from which the above extracts are taken, as an 'important viewpoint'; it was promptly followed up by a special session of the Ideological Commission called to implement its recommendations (Prague Radio, 18 January 1965). The incident demonstrates that the conservative apparat is still capable of regaining the initiative. In large measure this is due to a peculiar form of self-deception among the intellectual liberal spokesmen, who imagine themselves to be acting as the 'nation's conscience' (the slogan first coined at the Writers Congress in 1956), though in reality they form an exclusive and self-contained establishment

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whose real interests are largely bound up with the old guard. Underlying the verbal fireworks there is a deepseated demoralisation among the members of this in-group, whose privileged status would be imperilled by radical reform no less than the party leaders. Even the demand for such reform could hardly avoid dealing with the charge, which can be made against most of the present liberals, of fifteen years active collaboration; only a very small minority could deny the accusation flung at Ilya Ehrenburg by Leonid Ilychev: 'We wrote because we believed; you didn't believe—but you wrote all the same'.[7]

Ladislav Mnacko does not, in this respect, belong to the liberals; he 'wrote because he believed', and he has on several occasions chosen to defend 'honest' stalinists ('Even the deformations of Stalinism were guided by the desire to do good for the people' —*LN*, 21 November 1964). His views have even been quoted by the surviving zhdanovites in support of their running battle with the new establishment, carried on over the past year in the pages of *Literarni Noviny* and the party organ *Rude Pravo* respectively.

'There are no differences whatsoever between my party and myself', Mnacko wrote in his open letter to Rolf Hochhuth last July, thereby claiming exemption from the dilemma of his colleagues. That is to say, service to the truth and service to the party are not in conflict; both are part of the 'true' loyalty; and this being so—as Mnacko evidently believed was demonstrated by his own example—it serves as justification of the party's claim to rule. In his reply, the German dramatist challenges this argument more forcefully than had been done before in the Czechoslovak press. This remarkable and even sensational correspondence forms a kind of epilogue to the affair. Hochhuth wrote after two months' delay. His letter is dated 23 September 1964 and appeared in the West German weekly *Die Zeit* in October (42/1964); *Kulturny Zivot* printed it after a further three months (2 January 1965), together with a reply by Mnacko. There appears to have been some uncertainty about publication: in November, it was announced that selected passages would be released (*LN*, 21 November 1964), and though the full text was eventually printed, the New Year issue of the Slovak journal was sold out almost from the moment of publication.

In his letter, which appears under the title 'The Ability and the Freedom to Revolt', the German dramatist expresses his full solidarity with Mnacko's veto on the publication of his book outside Czechoslovakia. He notes lurid details of the West German publisher's advertising campaign: 'I have before me a poster showing Stalin's head

[7] A remarkable account of the Czech intellectual's state of mind appeared in *Survey*, April 1964 ('The Art of Survival'). The anonymous author stresses the fact that 'despite (or because) of everything', he is still a communist, and justifies his loyalty; yet a page or two later he confesses: 'I find that I have spared myself. . . . The fact of the matter is that I have almost reached the end as a citizen and as a writer'. Few intellectuals in Czechoslovakia could honestly say that they have never felt the same.

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in life size . . . and the triumphant text: The censor consistently prevented publication of these stories . . .'. But Hochhuth also makes it clear that he considers Mnacko's case in no way comparable with his own. The author of *The Representative* is concerned not merely with preventing the exploitation of his work for propaganda purposes. 'If after a performance in East Berlin I were to toast my hosts in Soviet champagne, how could I know that among them there weren't some of those "lawyers' who eight years ago sent Professor Wolfgang Harich to a prison cell?' More generally, Hochhuth regards as intolerable the idea of prominent members of the party elite applauding his play from an official box, while Catholics in the audience would be prevented from protesting against it.[8]

By the same token, the German writer considers Mnacko's loyalty as a party member incompatible with his profession as author. 'However much your radical chronicle of stalinism contributed to the humanisation of communism—and the impact of this contribution is doubtless heightened by the fact that you are a party member—I fail to understand how your party membership can be identified with your calling as a writer . . . You will, of course, point to your *Delayed Reports*. But permit me to go one step further—and it is this step, alas, that separates us. . . .' This is the party's claim on the writer's solidarity and conformism, the demand for 'partisanship', i.e. support for the party's 'characteristic claim to absolute authority, which in itself puts it beyond control'.

WHAT is at stake here is not, in Hochhuth's eyes, the author's will to get at the truth and expose evils. He pays tribute to Mnacko for his courage and sincerity; yet 'this is not a question of courage, but only of the author's freedom to choose his subject . . .'. Hochhuth —who has not read the book himself—notes the views of Western critics about the communist orthodoxy of the victims in *Delayed Reports*: 'Was it not your party status that forced you to keep silent about those who paid with their lives for the struggle against your party?' He cites Soviet intervention in the February crisis in 1948, the mystery of Jan Masaryk's death, the judicial murder of prominent anti-communists, and even the massacre of the Polish officers at Katyn on Stalin's orders as themes which are still taboo for Czechoslovak writers. Thus in the final analysis, the party is still the arbiter of truth, even of Mnacko's truth. The communist writer has no other criterion but the 'terrorist fallacy' that there is only this one truth.

The compromises which this fallacy forces upon the writer are, to Hochhuth's mind, no better in essence than a compromise with the nazi past of Germany. Indeed, the conquest of absolute power by any

[8] During an interview in London in January, Hochhuth suggested that the subsequent release of Harich may have been a reaction to his offer, made in the letter, of releasing *The Representative* if Harich were pardoned.

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ruling party is 'undoubtedly the most dreadful disaster that can befall a nation. . . . I would not compare any system of government with Hitler's; yet every absolutism is potential nazism and the writer should be the last to support it'.

In his reply, Mnacko refuses to accept the German writer's challenge. He denies a Catholic author the right to criticise the communist party: 'The Catholic church, Mr Hochhuth, has not yet called its 20th congress. . . . And—forgive me for speaking frankly—when West Germans today talk about humanism, democracy, freedom, it is always in connection with our lack of these things. . . .' Mnacko's article, in fact, is less a polemic on the points raised by Hochhuth than a declaration of loyalty. He pleads his own case; and in doing so resurrects the stock clichés of party propaganda which he had done more than anyone else to explode. The solution to all problems of truth and freedom lies in acquiring the 'leninist art of government—when we have learned it, our system of people's democracy will be much more perfect a democracy than the two-party system in Western Germany or anywhere else'. No priest was ever imprisoned in Czechoslovakia except for subversive activity against the state. The February coup was a 'strictly legal change of political system, carried out with complete fairness . . . and supremely humane means, with the absolute support of the absolute majority of the people'. Western critics are refuted by the *tu quoque* argument—Vietnam, Algiers, Suez, Indonesia, the Congo, Guatemala, Cuba, the 'renaissance of McCarthyism' in the United States, and even Warren Hastings in India demonstrate the perfidy or futility of the 'liberal intellectual' under capitalism. The Katyn massacre and the other instances cited by Hochhuth come under the heading of political legends, and 'there's work enough clearing up what really happened—we can't be bothered with refuting legends'.

As regards the question of *partiinost*, Mnacko reaffirms that he writes what he wishes and as he wishes—but 'in accordance with my party discipline and because of that discipline'. There can thus be no conflict between truth and the party's will. This point, which Mnacko touches only marginally, is the subject of an academic commentary by a university lecturer in dialectical materialism, who says explicitly: 'Correct marxist policy is by definition truthful and a pursuit of truth, since it is part of the struggle for the progress of mankind' (*KZ*, 12 February 1965). This is a far cry from Mnacko's pledge to 'serve the truth and make it prevail'. The very force of Mnacko's indictment of the stalinist order seems to have closed the door on further investigation and led its author on a crab-like progress from the real world through impenetrable psychological mysteries, back to the old doctrinal formulas. What appeared to be a breakthrough seems more like the end of a chapter.

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# RUMANIAN TRAVELOGUE

*François Bondy*

'HEAR now what should by rights be done henceforth, so that I may answer what you ask of me, namely, how we—you and I—ought to behave towards one another. If you have ceased to value philosophy altogether, abandon it; but if you have learned from another or devised for yourself something better than that which I taught you, hold it in esteem. Accordingly, if what emanates from me meets with your approval, you ought also to hold me in esteem above all others. Now, therefore, lead on, as you did in the beginning, and I will follow behind. Esteemed by you, I, too, shall esteem you; not esteemed, I shall hold my peace. Furthermore, if you hold me in esteem and precede me therein, you will appear to esteem philosophy also; and the very fact that you undertake inquiries in another quarter will incline many people to the satisfactory opinion that you are a philosopher. But, if I esteem you without being esteemed in return, I shall appear to set store by riches and to aspire to them—and that, as we know, earns universal disapprobation. In short, esteem, which in your case reflects well on the two of us, is in my case discreditable to both parties. So much, then, on this score . . .'

This passage from Plato's second letter to Dionysius was read to me by an author at his home in Bucharest. He went on: 'That's precisely our problem. Although we are expected to eulogise and sing praises, we aren't respected in return, but only taken seriously—which isn't the same thing—so seriously that we can be hailed before an editorial board and asked to alter individual words in a story or poem. I know authors who have inserted characters into their novels which they never originally intended. They were requested to do so, and if they wanted their work to reach the public they couldn't say no. If only people would stop watching us so closely and respect us for what we are, we should be able to revere those who rule us with greater conviction. As things stand—and particularly in the last few months—we can admire them and approve of many of their recent measures, but as to " revering " them—well, that's quite a different matter.'

If a Polish or Hungarian writer had said that to me I would mention his name without hesitation. Even if he had been a Czech, I should still have asked him if it were permissible—or advisable—to quote him. In the case of a Rumanian, however—two years after Rumania's bold break with the Russian-controlled East European economic community and months after the de-Russification campaign which has created such a perceptible rift between Rumania and her mighty neighbour, previously extolled as a model in every respect—I cannot for a moment contemplate naming the speaker. My account may forfeit some of its authenticity and credibility in consequence. I shall be quoting nameless, faceless individuals and suppressing one or two readily identifiable details, thereby leaving the door open to personal bias and exaggeration, but it is

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preferable that I should jeopardise my own testimony rather than endanger the safety of those who confided in an unknown guest.

It is as easy to enter Rumania as it is difficult to leave. Anyone can obtain a visa at the frontier or airport without delay. Any experiences in or conjectures about this unfamiliar country which I shall recount here can be confirmed or disputed by a number of colleagues who have been there in recent months.

'Two weeks in another country.' For me, they were two weeks in a country whose language I did not understand and which I had never visited before—at the best, therefore, an extremely fragmentary and limited basis on which to form an assessment. Under such circumstances, chance encounters readily become pregnant with symbolic significance, and it is always possible that I missed the one crucial encounter which could have helped me to form a different and more accurate appreciation of everything I saw.

So much for reservations. From now on I shall give as straightforward an account as I can.

Any visitor to Rumania who has not come there to hunt, visit the monasteries of Moldavia or patronise the Black Sea Riviera (Mamaia, which the Rumanians privately call their 'foreign exchange factory'), is usually a guest not of the country but of the state. He is welcomed, provided with accommodation, driven around and subjected to cordial and intensive hospitality. This does not necessarily endear the country to him. V. S. Pritchett, literary critic of the *New Statesman*, has recently published some impressions of travel abroad. The first paragraph of his chapter on Rumania reads as follows:

> Rumania irritates one from the start. Together with Czechoslovakia, it is the most rigid of the satellite countries. As a visitor, you are compelled to have a guide, and the guide dogs your every step. When you emerge from your bedroom in the morning, he is waiting for you. He bores you the whole day long. He is informative by nature, but humourless, tends to be didactic and knows everything. I could not escape the impression that shrewd dissimulation and a reactionary mentality are widespread.
>
> (V. S. Pritchett, *Foreign Faces*, October 1964.)

When embassy officials of the Rumanian People's Republic in Paris proposed that I visit their country, they did so in full cognisance of the publication I edit, a publication in which the Rumanian regime and its cultural policy in particular has been severely criticised—just to make matters worse—by Rumanian émigrés such as the philosopher Cioran, the critic Virgi Ierunca and that most recent of distinguished exiles, Petru Dumitriu, formerly the pampered darling of the regime. In conjunction with this periodical I had also published a pamphlet which reproduced, *inter alia*, the provisions of the Rumanian penal code, among them the death penalty for Rumanian citizens who 'injure Socialism' through their contacts with foreigners. Thus my invitation to visit

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Rumania came as an agreeable surprise and a symptom of the new accessibility which has been detectable in many spheres in Rumania for more than a year.

It was suggested that I get in touch with the press bureau of the Foreign Ministry, which would afford me all the help I needed.

WHEN my Tarom Line Ilyushin touched down at Bucharest late in the evening and I booked in at the Athénée Palace—all the tables in the elaborate old-fashioned dining-room were occupied, as they were at the Ambassador and Lido, the other members of the capital's trio of good hotels—the chef de réception hesitated before directing me to my reserved room. 'Whose guest are you?' he inquired, while on either side of me representatives of Krupp, Otto Wolf, Stahlunion and other firms who had arrived at the same time were being handed their keys. (The Athénée had until recently been the headquarters of the Federal German trade mission.) 'Your guest, I hope', I answered, preening myself on my repartee. 'No', he said, patiently but firmly, 'what I meant was, which Ministry is looking after you here?' Conscious that there was a queue of new arrivals behind me also waiting for rooms and that this was not the moment for prolonged discussion, I replied promptly: 'The Ministry of Information.' This sounded good, and I got my room. Much later, I learned that there was no Ministry by that name—this seems to be a Parisian speciality—but fortunately the chef de réception was as ignorant of the fact as I was myself.

Next day, a radiant October Sunday with a temperature in the high seventies, I hung around in the foyer waiting for telephone calls or visits from sundry friends of friends whom I had written to and notified of my arrival in advance. No one called, so I divided the afternoon between the open-air museum of Transylvanian peasant houses—the most enjoyable walk in Bucharest—and an exihibition entitled 'Twenty Years of Rumanian People's Democracy'. Among the numerous items on display beneath the glass dome were consumer goods. When I picked up an obviously well-made shoe to inspect it more closely, I was told somewhat brusquely in Rumanian not to touch. It then struck me that my fellow-visitors were filing reverently past the textile and other goods as though they were museum pieces, and that no one ever inquired the price of anything. (I might add that the shoes I later saw in shops did not look as good as those in the exhibition, which must have been prototypes—but that is by the way.)

On Monday, when I met one of the gentlemen whom I had vainly waited to hear from, I asked him why he had made no sign of life. 'I couldn't get in touch with you', he said, looking surprised. 'I didn't know which Ministry had invited you here or who was accompanying you.' My own surprise at his response was no greater than his surprise at my reaction. Ten days later, when I returned to Bucharest from Klausenburg, another of my new acquaintances asked me who had

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arranged my trip. On being told that I had bought an air ticket from the State travel bureau and simply booked into an hotel, he exclaimed: 'It really is a new departure, a foreigner travelling like that!' I subsequently learned that visiting writers from France whose accounts I had read had never travelled alone, but were constantly attended and escorted. Is it possible that their discussions with Rumanian confrères may have suffered occasionally as a result?

The Foreign Ministry certainly had every intention of giving me the traditional 'treatment', but I was fortunate enough to get off on the wrong foot with the responsible official at the press bureau—partly, no doubt, because his comparative unfamiliarity with Western journalists impaired the tone of our relationship. The official in question wanted to place a chauffeur-driven car and interpreter at my disposal for the duration of my stay in Bucharest. When I declined the offer on the grounds that I only planned to visit people who knew a Western language —authors, theatre folk and the like—he said irritably: 'I give you my word that your escort will only be there for your personal convenience—he has nothing to do with the Siguranza. If you don't need him, simply tell him to wait.' He thereupon proposed a car trip via Sinaia, Brassov and Sibin to Cluj, known to the Germans as Klausenburg and to the Hungarians as Kolosvar. (Ten years ago Brassov bore Stalin's name.) Next day I rang the official and asked him to postpone my trip for twenty-four hours so that I could attend a performance of Dürrenmatt's *Frank V* at the Jewish State Theatre. He told me that he had someone with him, but when I tried to apologise and hang up he raised his voice as though addressing a third party and said: 'Three days should have been long enough to satisfy you that what Messrs. Dumitriu, Ierunca and Reichmann have written about Rumania in your magazine is all a pack of lies.'

Any further reference to the car trip was abandoned, not rudely, but in a manner reminiscent of Franz Kafka, recently removed from the Rumanian black list and now widely read. My official proposed a series of even longer and more attractive tours, none of which fitted into the time at my disposal, reiterating several times, when they came to nothing: 'If there's anything else I can do for you, please don't hesitate to ask. That's what I'm here for.' This was how I came to adopt what my friend from Bucharest considered the unusual course of buying tickets and reserving hotel rooms for myself, thereby taking home with me a quite different and very much more favourable impression of Rumania than my esteemed colleague Mr Pritchett. The few months that elapsed between his visit and my own may have accounted for this.

I can certainly state—and although I was regarded as a rarity in Bucharest I was by no means the first or only person to do so—that it is now possible to travel in Rumania as one wishes, if not unshadowed, at least unescorted. Moreover, the request made to me on my arrival at the airport, namely, that I should announce in advance what places

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I intended to visit, could not have been meant as seriously as all that, because no check was made before my departure.

One more detail before I leave the subject of travelling conditions: it was impossible to book a seat on a return flight from Cluj at the Bucharest end. 'No seats available', was the reply, even though three 'planes made the trip every morning. It seemed equally impossible to book a return passage for the morrow in Cluj itself—at first, that is. Very late in the day it suddenly turned out that seats were available after all—as, indeed, there were, since the 'plane took off almost empty. Why couldn't this have been ascertained earlier? Because, so I was informed, all seats were reserved for senior officials and their aides, who might have to fly to Bucharest urgently. Tarom apparently prefers to forgo the business which, as foreign visitors become more numerous, will necessitate their being able to make reservations.

I was to discover something similar in another sphere, that is, the difficulty of booking a theatre seat in advance. A writer to whom I had commented on Bucharest's excellent presentations of Ionesco and Frisch told me that he hardly ever went to the theatre because it was too hard to obtain tickets. This surprised me, since none of the performances I attended had been a sell-out and some theatres were, to my astonishment, playing to half-empty houses. The explanation seems to be that blocks of tickets are allotted to cultural and youth organisations which may or may not make use of them.

Empty aeroplanes, empty or half-empty theatres . . . The only places I never found empty were editorial offices. 'How many editors are there on your magazine?' I was asked by a colleague who worked for a monthly review. 'Three and a proof reader,' I replied. 'What about you?' 'There are forty-eight of us.' The same applied, with one exception which I shall have occasion to mention later, to all editorial staffs, not to mention the battalions employed by *Scinteia*, the Party daily. An editorial post seems to be a form of subsidy accorded to writers and critics, who engage in a variety of additional occupations, such as teaching at the universities. Publications pay as little heed to the question of overheads as they do to that of circulation. All periodicals are published by the Writers' Union. Many of them, literary reviews in particular, are printed in grossly inadequate numbers and snapped up on the date of issue. Others are brought out in numbers which far exceed demand, notably the official philosophical review, still rigidly doctrinaire and on sale in every little newsagent's but not, I suspect, read voluntarily by anyone. Volumes of poetry are often sold out quickly but seldom reprinted. Paper is in short supply, and its utilisation only partially conforms to the law of supply and demand. When a Western book like Lampedusa's *Leopard* becomes a best-seller, it is allocated a near-adequate supply of paper, though I am not certain that this applied to Albert Camus' *The Plague*, translated by that

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admirable novelist Marin Preda, which had disappeared from the bookshops. Interesting and readable books are rare in general and even rarer outside Bucharest. What the book trade has to offer is meagre in comparison with the alert and lively interest evinced by the country's widely-based intelligentsia. Michail Beniuc, head of the Writers' Union, told me how surprised he was, when presiding over a debate on Western literature last spring, to discover that the gaps in the participants' knowledge were by no means as great as he had supposed.

Rumania has culture and a cultural apparatus, and the latter controls the former. Culture is the business of organisations, above all the Rumanian Writers' Union. Having bought some speeches by Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej—which are on sale in every bookstore but never purchased—I read an address delivered by the country's most powerful man to a writers' congress in January 1962. 'At this historic stage in the development of our society', he declared, 'it is literature's highly responsible task to co-operate with all its might in creating Socialist awareness and a new kind of human being, and in eradicating the influence of bourgeois ideology and education. The mission of creative literature is to mirror economic progress, to portray the radiant countenance of worker, collectivized farmer and intellectual, and to spur the people on to still further heroic feats performed in a spirit of patriotic pride . . .' The crucial passage ran: 'The publications of the Writers' Union must combat literature which is alien to reality and frustrate the sterile endeavours of a literary cliquism espoused by allegedly subtle minds who take refuge in gloomy abstractionism or the distant past, as sometimes expressed through the medium of poetry. The fruitful development of literary activity depends to a large extent on the activities of the Writers' Union, whose duty it is to muster the forces of literature on the soil of Marxist-Leninist ideology and to mould young writers with loving care.'

The president of the literary association which has been entrusted with such exalted and far-reaching tasks, merits closer acquaintance. The poet Michail Beniuc is a small, lively, urbane man from Transylvania. He has a brilliant command of numerous languages, has translated Apollinaire, and formerly worked as a physiologist with Uexkuell in Hamburg—not that I learned any of these details from him personally during our four-hour conversation. Beniuc, who as secretary of the Union steered it through the 'ultra-doctrinaire' period, when the number of banned books reached 30,000, is today conciliatory, open-minded and eager to make contact with the outside world. He also, perhaps quite involuntarily, overestimates the cultural role played by organisations, since he spoke of a meeting between a handful of delegates from the French PEN-Club and the Rumanian Writers' Union as if it were a milestone in the coming together of Rumanian and French culture. Although it was Beniuc who drew attention to the Proust-Joyce-Kafka constellation which appeared in the Eastern sky a short

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while ago and recommended closer study of those long-outlawed authors, he simultaneously emphasised that, while it was interesting to make their acquaintance, it went without saying that Rumanian writers could not borrow from such experimentalists because their own problems were quite dissimilar—a disturbing assertion in that it may have been meant less as a statement open to discussion than as a binding directive.

Michail Beniuc is not neglected by the weekly and monthly reviews published by the Writers' Union. Poems by him not only appeared in many of the periodicals I brought back with me—an almost exclusively cultural cargo which made my baggage twenty kilos over-weight!—but invariably occupied a dominant position. How does Beniuc write? Not solely in an activist vein, or his poems would never have appeared so frequently in pre-war Rumanian reviews. At times naturalistic and graphic, his poetry generally has a metallically optimistic ring, e.g.:

I shall be faithful to this age
and to its strict, pure way of thought.
With precept stern and sterner fact
it fortifies our dream with steel.
Hewn out of adamantine stuff
and innocent of magic rite,
it wrests our dream from the tight grasp
of former days' inertia
and drives it with unerring force
to cast its gaze upon new worlds.

Benuic's standing as a poet, which only those who read him in the original Rumanian can assess, is less important, however, than the role of the organisation he heads. Some middle-generation writers I met expressed discreet criticism of him. I was told, for instance, that some poems could only be published because of intervention by a certain political figure, and that many owed their appearance to the personal intercession of Rumania's greatest living poet, eighty-six-year-old Tudor Arghezi. In the eyes of these critics, the role of the 'Union' was more that of a censorship board whose tolerance and open-mindedness they contrasted favourably with that of political bodies such as the Council of State. In fact, no dispute seems ever to have arisen between the Union, which tends and represents writers' interests, and the six censorship offices, which filter their work. Literature has suffered as a result. Compare the late-lamented Michail Sadoveanu's last novels with his earlier works, and an appreciable discrepancy in quality becomes evident. Like Ralea, the university teacher who died in East Berlin, Sadoveanu was one of those talented Rumanian intellectuals who came to terms with various regimes, a phenomenon which no one with a knowledge of Rumanian history can lightly condemn, though their shrewd and sceptical spirit of accommodation is in contrast to the enthusiastic jargon of the party to which they attached themselves.

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The literature of the past receives freer recognition today than it has done hitherto. Books are now appearing by Panaït Istrati, the great and truly national writer who produced an angry, disillusioned book about the Soviet Union before his death in 1935, and so became until recently a forgotten and impermissible author. People went so far as to assert that Istrati, a man who had been encouraged in his work by Romain Rolland and Henri Barbusse, had not really died, but continued to work for years as a police agent under the Fascists. Not only are such rumours and calumnies out of vogue today, but—a typical feature of such changes of face—no one will acknowledge that they were ever current. Actually, more of Istrati ought to be published, but I was told at the Writers' Union that this would be difficult because the members of his family were not making sufficient efforts to settle the question of copyright. I cannot, however, believe that private considerations of this sort would hinder publication in Rumania of the complete works of a major Rumanian writer who is once more an object of national pride . . .

One man who never made any concessions to prevailing doctrine and so forfeited public attention for a long time was Lucian Blaga, the poet, philosopher and mystic who died a short time ago. His poems are now being published, an eminent Rumanian literary critic, Krochmalniceanu, has devoted a book to him, and another critic named Tertulian is engaged on a book dealing with his philosophical theories. These are healthy signs, since what is involved is serious study rather than posthumous rehabilitation.

WHAT of a world-renowned playwright like Eugene Ionesco? The wind has veered in the direction of nationalism, and the present tendency is to take pride in any form of Rumanian achievement. As recently as two years ago, Ionesco was decried as decadent; today he is translated, printed and performed. *Rhinoceros*, that picture of mounting terror, mass-conformism and stubborn resistance by one lonely, unyielding individualist, here acquires peculiar overtones. In the foyer of the Comedy Theatre, which is adorned with scenes from the play executed in an admirable Late Expressionist style, bold lettering proclaims that *Rhinoceros* is a play against Fascism—as, indeed, it is. Ionesco witnessed the rise of the Iron Guard with abhorrence. The play's descent into bestiality, into herd-behaviour and the unleashing of baser instincts, certainly bears an affinity to the career of a movement whose adherents brutally slaughtered the great historian Jorga in his own home. However, the cliché-ridden phrases with which one character after another justifies his espousal of the new conformism carried additional overtones to the ears of the Bucharest public, especially the intellectuals who attended the early performances. Radu Beligan, who directs the Comedy and exerts a strong and beneficent influence on the theatre's programme as a whole, presents an original interpretation of the role of the individualist, Berenger. His is a surprisingly restrained production which is at its most

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horrific in the first act, when the grunting of the great beasts echoes round and round the auditorium. Thereafter the sound and fury fades until, finally, the distant hysteria all but dies away and everything becomes centred upon the solitary figure of Berenger, sitting there alertly with his double-barrelled shotgun, not like a cornered, desperate man, but like a hunter. Beligan told me later that his conception of the final act had been inspired by a Hemingway hunting episode. So much for *Rhinoceros*, a turning-point in the Rumanian theatre and a skilful and uninhibited production worthy of comparison with the Paris and Düsseldorf versions.

Although I saw a total of nine performances and rehearsals in Rumanian, Hungarian, German and Yiddish, and regard the theatre as the most satisfactory field of cultural endeavour in Rumania today, I shall refrain from giving it too much space here. First, however, a word about two more playwrights. *The Shadow*, by the late Soviet author Evgeny Schwarz, is also performed at the Comedy. Inspired by the Andersen fairy-tale, it is a satire about a royal court where everyone tries to eliminate everyone else by underhand means, and where the most evil character has the best chance of personal advancement. Posters in the foyer announce that this, too, is a satire on Fascism. Be that as it may, a rather different construction was put upon Schwarz's play in the Soviet Union.

One of the younger Rumanian authors from whom great things are expected is Tudor Masilu, who slightly anticipated the thaw a year ago with *Fools in the Moonlight*. This play, which exploits the clichés of contemporary jargon with extremely comic results, was an overwhelming success. Premier Maurer is said to have been highly amused, but another Minister who saw the play subsequently was less amused, and it was soon taken off. Masilu's new play, *The Sleepy Adventure*, is now being performed. In this, two 'negative' heroes—a parasite and a bureaucrat—compete with a 'positive' hero for a girl's hand in marriage. Naturally enough, the dialogue is crammed with quips and *double entendre*, but the crudity with which the 'positive' hero triumphs in the end creates an impression of dutiful conformism carried to grotesque extremes.

The subsidised Jewish State Theatre was never compelled to close its doors in the days when Jewish culture and language—universally known here as 'Jewish' and not Yiddish—was proscribed in the Soviet Union. Although some 200,000 Jews still speak the language, their numbers are declining with the advent of slightly easier emigration and the abandonment of language and traditions by a section of the younger generation. Thus, very little new blood is entering the acting profession, which makes the high standard maintained by the Jewish Theatre, directed by Auerbach, a childhood friend of the poet Paul Celan, all the more surprising. Many Rumanians attended the performance I saw of Dürrenmatt's *Frank V*, judging by the number of people who followed

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the dialogue in translation through head-phones. The producer Theodorescu, internationally acclaimed for his operatic productions and responsible for staging *The Threepenny Opera* and *Frank V*, is a non-Jewish Rumanian. He told me that he had only begun to understand the language while working on productions at this theatre.

Yiddish is only one of the many minority languages which play a part in Rumanian cultural life. The minority population—now fourteen per cent as compared with more than double that percentage in Greater Rumania before the war—consists mainly of Hungarians, whose numbers approach one-and-a-half million, and Saxons, who number about 400,000. However, even the 40,000 Serbian peasants of the Banat receive cultural nourishment in the form of a periodical in Serbian, although this is a hang-over from the period of strained relations between Rumania and Yugoslavia. The aim was to deter Rumania's Serbian minority from obtaining reading matter from a neighbouring country which was then condemned as heretical—nor were the measures taken merely cultural, but included the deportation of frontier communities to camps in Moldavia. Now that relations with Yugoslavia have improved and Bucharest has turned out to be as disappointing a Cominform capital as Belgrade once did, less importance is attached to the Serbs of Rumania.

ALTHOUGH Hungarian- and German-language authors such as Istvan Nagy, Cisek and Schuster appear in translation and there are some notable Rumanian periodicals in Hungarian and German, an almost indefinable deterioration in atmosphere has set in. The vigorous growth of Rumanian national consciousness, now a year old, is having repercussions, and it is fair to state that gradual but increasing attempts at ' Rumanification ' are being made, not only in Transylvania but in the autonomous Hungarian region round Tergu Muresh. The Hungarians of Transylvania were deeply affected by the events of 1956, and stern measures were taken against various individuals there. Intimidation still exists today, but contacts with Hungarians, foreign travel and visiting lecturers are on the increase. A Hungarian poet who gave a reading in a Transylvanian town declared that he felt as if he had been given a silent ovation—as if a wave of mute protest had gone out to him from the moist-eyed, tight-lipped audience.

A member of a linguistic minority once told me: ' I'm genuinely fond of the Rumanians. But,' he added quietly, ' I'll never get them to believe it.' Although I cannot quote chapter and verse, I venture to think that Hungarian- and German-speaking intellectuals react more critically and sensitively to the relics of Stalinism in the Rumanian system than the Rumanians themselves, but that they are careful never to move a step ahead of their Rumanian colleagues. They realise that liberalisation must come principally from the Rumanians, and that to associate it with the aspirations of ethnic minority groups at this particular juncture, when nationalism is acquiring a chauvinistic flavour, could only be detrimental.

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I shall not say much more about this delicate and complex problem here. Rumania harbours a greater multiplicity of languages and cultures than any European country apart from Switzerland, in the last analysis because she has refrained from expelling her Germans wholesale, as other East European countries have done. The Hungarian theatre and Hungarian opera in Cluj are proof enough of the continued existence of Hungarian culture. Even though the Rumanian and Hungarian opera companies never perform on the same evening, they do not share the same corps de ballet but maintain two separate ones. A local Hungarian told me: 'We have as much cultural activity here as we need—and perhaps a little to spare.' Indeed, two opera houses, two theatres, and four cultural reviews are probably enough for any city of 200,000 inhabitants, even a lively university centre like Cluj.

After the war, the Germans of Rumania were subjected to a collective decree under which the men were compelled to work in Russian labour camps as a form of 'reparation'. I know of one Socialist—a man who spent four years in gaol under Marshal Antonescu's dictatorship—who stated in a newspaper that the measure was unjust, that it was easy to draw a distinction between Nazis and non-Nazis, and that the Rumanians had had Nazis of their own, i.e. the Iron Guard. He disappeared into a prison camp once more, this time for eight years, and only secured his release thanks to intervention by the British Labour Party. I did not talk to him personally, but his case is not an untypical one. In the past year, more than 12,000 political detainees have been released in two stages, but, whereas in the Soviet Union and Hungary the fate of political prisoners has found an echo in literature, the question of exploring such a theme does not arise in Rumania. I would even call it unthinkable, had things not happened there in the past year which would have been regarded as equally 'unthinkable' two years ago. Where prophecies about Eastern Europe are concerned, especially pessimistic ones, caution is now indicated.

One phenomenon which strikes me as an invisible *ne plus ultra* of liberalisation in Rumania is the neglect of contemporary writing in neighbouring countries. Joyce and even Beckett are lauded, but no one mentions the Polish playwright Mrozek and no theatre has yet presented his play *The Police*. No one mentions Georg Lukacs either. I discussed this with Breslacu, editor of the new international literary review *Twentieth Century*, who lived in Paris for years and is a composer and musicologist in his own right. As one of the small circle of old, convinced communists, he can take advantage of the new accessibility of the West—and I hope he enjoys doing so, for the new age is far more in keeping with his cultural background than the doctrinaire past. Nevertheless, when I asked him why so little attention was paid to the liberal minds of Poland and Hungary, he replied: 'The Poles are frivolous. We build slowly, but on firmer foundations.'

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Another hypothesis which I should like to advance, not that I am the first to do so, is that assimilation of cultural elements from the West is less risky. Proust, Joyce, and Kafka have found their way into the country like Western tourists who can afford to do much that is undreamed of by the average Rumanian, who would never compare his own position with theirs. Were he to learn of the liberties now being taken by writers in other People's Democracies, the result would be totally different, since a basis for comparison exists. Hence the distinction.

Contact with the West means that windows are being opened and that the air is becoming a little more breathable; contact with the more liberal East would mean the opening of a door—and Rumania has not yet reached that stage. This is a time of planned, supervised, and controlled 'de-dogmatisation'—in other words, of incipient thaw, even though the thaw seems more like an avalanche when one recalls the atmosphere that prevailed in the preceding year.

A counterpart of openness towards the West is occlusion towards the East. The closing of the Maxim Gorky Institute and the Russian bookshop, the winding up of the Rumanian edition of the Russian magazine *New Times*, and the abolition of Russian as an obligatory school subject—all these measures have been implemented without publicity, but thoroughly. They have been welcomed as a happy release. Rumanian intellectuals were affronted by the Russification of culture and public taste, which went further than any outside observer could have imagined. In 1950 *Viata Sindicata* wrote: 'Intellectuals find in the Russian language confirmation of the ultimate victory of peace-loving forces. In the Latin world, all progressive elements are learning Russian. Under the banner of the Russian army of liberation the Russian language has crossed the borders of the Soviet Union and is being borne on the wings of the peace-dove to the farthest corners of the earth.'

Enforced ties with Russia have engendered a wave of profound revulsion. I would go so far as to say that the regime has been justified in limiting published expressions of opinion. If all that is being said about Russia in private were to appear in print it might be construed as provocation—and that, in a country bordered by the USSR, could be dangerous. One can understand why, after a warning visit by Tito, the anti-Russian campaign which Party lecturers had been fomenting on every factory floor was abruptly called off. In a country where suppressed popular sentiment and government policy for once coincided, public opinion might have snowballed until it became an emotional and uncontrollable factor. To avert this is in the interest of any Rumanian regime, especially a regime which, even if it has now broken free of it, was originally installed by Russian armed force. Whether the regime is well advised not to exploit the other areas of common ground which it shares with genuine public opinion in Rumania, and to rely solely on a press which is its own echo, is another matter.

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AS for the press, Bucharest's dominant architectural feature is the headquarters of *Scinteia*, the Party newspaper. A massive edifice embellished with barley-sugar towers in a wholly Old Stalinesque ornamental style, it contrasts strongly with the new villas of the present rulers, who live in what was once the boyar quarter, and with the new blocks of flats, which outwardly resemble similar buildings in Western Europe. Entering Kiselev Avenue through a triumphal arch, one can see its huge slab-like form looming above the partially artificial lakes at the far end. As in the case of the similarly constructed House of Soviet Friendship in Warsaw, it might be said that the top floor of the Scinteia Building affords the finest view of Bucharest, i.e. one which is unimpaired by the sight of the Scinteia Building itself. A Western diplomat explained to me why he valued the Rumanian press. Since every item of information is published with a specific end in view, careful study can yield clues to the current attitude of the regime—one such clue being the consistent censorship now imposed on any official pronouncements made by foreign communist leaders which denigrate the Federal German Republic. Be that as it may, to the average reader, *Scinteia*, with its innumerable editors, remains the embodiment of a tedious official publication in which decrees and slogans occupy the space that would elsewhere be allotted to news.

Nevertheless, the upper floors of the building's right-hand wing are devoted to the production of two weeklies which are symptomatic of a new spirit: *Contemporanul*, a cultural review, and *Lumea*, an international news magazine modelled on *Time*. Both share the same editor-in-chief, Georg Ivascu, a middle-aged man of great personal charm who became a communist early in life and edited the illicit student magazine at Jassy in his young days. Ivascu makes do with a small editorial staff. As he stressed more than once in the course of our conversation: 'We've become strictly professional now. Our business is journalism.' It is indeed, though *Contemporanul*, which gives a more lively account of contemporary literature and art than can be found elsewhere, goes rather further than mere journalism. *Lumea* not only presents some very acceptable reports on the West but prints long and abundant excerpts from Western periodicals. One feels an underlying yearning for a new Titolesco, the diplomatic wizard who helped Rumania to achieve world recognition during the League of Nations era. The fact that *Lumea* is now produced on premises formerly devoted to the production of the Rumanian edition of a Soviet newspaper not only denotes a geographical shift of interest westwards, but signals the beginning of a new type of reporting. Ivascu is the most gratifying phenomenon in Rumanian journalism.

Another periodical which always sells briskly and pays particular attention to talented new writers, many of whom devote themselves to poetry devoid of doctrinaire themes, is *Luceafarul*, the *Morning Star*. Its chief editor is the novelist Eugen Barbu, probably the most talented

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writer of fiction in Rumania today apart from Marin Preda. His novel *The Pit*, written in underworld argot, was violently attacked by one group of critics, who charged it with being offensive and prejudicial to the work of socialist education, though other critics came to its defence. Barbu's second novel, though rather more edifying in that it described episodes from the communists' strugle for power, was not a successful book, and Barbu has since rewritten it. His third novel has won fresh plaudits for its high quality. It was hard to establish contact with Barbu, who lacks the natural command of foreign languages found among the older intellectuals, but I later saw him presiding over a poetry reading and discussion attended by well over a hundred and fifty people. This circle, which meets every Tuesday, is named after Labis, the gifted poet who, drunk and despairing, died in an accident at the age of twenty-one.

ALTHOUGH Rumania has its rigidities, changes are also in evidence. Without evaluating them, I venture to quote two or three which leap to the eye. First, anyone who wanted to leave the country used to be deprived of his citizenship and treated as an enemy of the state. Today, though still an expensive and tedious business, emigration no longer incurs loss of nationality. Secondly, foreign mail had to be handed in at the post office unsealed. This is no longer so. Finally, every change in the ownership of a typewriter had to be reported to the authorities so that they could trace the source of circulars. Compulsory notification now applies only in the case of duplicating machines.

These changes may not amount to much, but they do indicate that the government is cautiously endeavouring to give public opinion a little more rope. Now that a measure of harmony between regime and popular opinion has been created by the success of 'de-satellisation', for the sake of which numerous allowances are being made, the process of domestic relaxation could well go further. With government and people more at one today than ever before in the RPR, pressure and intimidation could be decreased. That is why I should like to think of the present state of affairs as transitional. De-satellisation and liberalisation do not necessarily coincide. On the contrary, there must be some significance in the fact that, while the Hungarians have secured much greater domestic freedom of speech, yet remain incorporated in the external system of Soviet policy, the Rumanians, by contrast, have secured more elbow-room in foreign policy and economics while remaining subject to the stricter limitations on published expressions of opinion. However, all the restrictions in the world will not long delay the gradual transition from docile conformism to the airing of genuine problems and preoccupations.

'Are we to be the Albania of the West?' one Rumanian asked me. The coupling of 'Albania' and 'the West' gives a clue to the special nature of Rumania's present position. To define Rumania either as an

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Albania which gets on well with the West or as a country which practises Stalinism sans excesses and isolationism is partly an over-refinement and partly a geographical truism, but there is some substance in the idea. One diplomat, who has worked in Bucharest for several years, has never entered a Rumanian home nor entertained a Rumanian privately in all that time. Even official invitations to embassy functions must be sent to the protocol department of the Foreign Ministry, never to private addresses. Restrictions on contacts with foreigners have been very widespread. They are now on the wane, but easing of foreign travel would be a vital step forward. Trips abroad are reserved exclusively for apparatchiks who nominate themselves for the privilege. In Hungary the obtaining of an exit visa is a normal procedure; not so in Rumania. Many young intellectuals have never been outside their own borders, and even the older writers have not done so for sixteen years. Any change in this respect would have far-reaching results.[1]

I was oppressed by the way in which Rumanians asked me what Paris and London look like today, as though they completely dismissed the possibility of seeing them with their own eyes. Ease of egress makes a country a happier place to live in. It is impossible to tell Rumanians much about the West, where effortless foreign travel is part of our way of life, without arousing unspoken yearning and protest. Only when travel is rendered easier, not merely for tourists who bring foreign currency with them, but for ordinary Rumanians, will those in power dispel the impression that they are engaged on a 'Hundred Flowers' experiment which is capable of being revoked as abruptly as was the Chinese. This fear persists, and it has a paralysing effect.

When conversing with intellectuals, I was often aware that they had been officially reprimanded at some stage or had stopped publishing—sometimes for years on end—but we spoke as if such questions did not exist. As a French poet who is in frequent contact with East Europeans once said: 'We try, by dint of extreme cordiality, to bridge the unspoken gap between us. We know they cannot say everything they think, nor think everything they say.' That was how it struck me too. To some on the other side, however, things can look different. A literary critic whom I shall do my best to quote verbatim told me:

'You outsiders have always concentrated closely on all the distressing things that were printed and perpetrated during the dark years. But oughtn't you to have paid some regard to the decent literature that was being published even in those days? What effort did you make to know us, except as an intellectual pointer to political conditions? How much it would have meant to us if you had appreciated the good books that came out here! The West's relationship to Rumanian literature is a lottery. Everything remains fortuitous.'

[1] Since my return, some of the best independent-minded writers have been in Paris—another welcome sign of progress.

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I agreed with him, but not simply out of politeness. To complain about the suppression of Rumanian culture when we show no interest in what it represents is an untenable attitude. The causes are not solely political, of course, but stem from the obstacles presented by all minor-language cultures. On this basis, a Dutchman is entitled to be as dissatisfied as a Rumanian. It is nonetheless true that we ought to read Marin Preda, Eugen Barbu, and many others. The passive receptivity accorded the West by Rumanians themselves in more liberal times is not sufficient.

WHAT does it really mean, the ' opening up ' of Rumania? In the first place, it means simply the reacquisition of a traditional manoeuvrability in foreign relations—a form of national self-assertion—and the mitigation of a doctrinaire atmosphere which was organically connected with the country's participation in an international system. This is a time of change, perhaps of transformation. As we have heard, Mr Pritchett could not take a single step in Bucharest unescorted. In autumn 1964 I was free to travel anywhere I wished. The ice, once particularly thick there, has become perceptibly thinner. Behind a moderate but formalised ' National Stalinism ' can be detected the outlines of a unique and individual part of Europe. The Rumanians speak a Romance language which contains Russian sounds foreign to any West European tongue. For example, they have two words for ' time ', the Slavonic *vreme* as well as the Latin *timp*. It is easy to see that these twin roots are a potential source of richness, always provided that one is not suppressed in favour of the other. The Rumanians' Orthodox Church, which seems to embody much ritual and little profound religious feeling, is tolerated. The Rumanians also have a Uniate Church, which is still banned—to the delight of Orthodox churchmen—even though Rumania's independent development and the Uniate Church are closely associated.

Rumanian literature is capable of sudden accesses of profundity and comic absurdity. Ionesco has his predecessors in Caragiale, Urmuz, and Cioran, who became a superb essayist in French. Rumania also produced Tristan Tzara, the father of Dadaism, and the sculptor Brancusi, whose combination of profoundly traditional elements and bold experimentalism was genuinely Rumanian. Shortly before his death in Bucharest a few months ago, Tudor Vianu, who represented Rumania in UNESCO, declared: ' We must once more remember that we are world citizens '—thus rehabilitating a much-maligned expression.

The poet Heinz Kahlau, who lives in East Berlin, is both known and translated in Rumania. The following lines, quoted to me by someone in Cluj, are his:

> The loud voices, blurred with passion,
> will die away.
> In spring I shall see
> new and younger leaves.

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It all comes down to the sentiment attributed to Plato in his second letter to the tyrant Dionysius, which, as I related at the beginning, was read to me by someone in Bucharest: a feeling that minds should be respected, not organised, mobilised, and coddled. If I stress this it is because I conversed with only one kind of Rumanian, the intellectuals, and cannot pronounce upon the hopes and aspirations of other sections of the population. Among them, at least—or so I believe—there is evidence of changes to come. In so far as I had expected more than that, I probably visited Rumania five minutes too soon.

* * * * * * *

Since completing this article, the news has come through that Beniuc has not been re-appointed President of the Rumanian Writers Union. That office is now held by the 72-year old poet Demostene Botez, editor of *Viata Romaneasca*, one of the old group of liberals. To judge from the message sent to the Union by the Party central committee, a certain relaxation of literary controls may now be expected; it uses the term 'socialist humanism', hitherto regarded in Rumania as a subversive expression.

**Soviet Scientist in China**

MIKHAIL A. KLOCHKO

The author was a top-ranking Soviet scientist who was invited, in 1958, by the Chinese Academy of Sciences to help develop their research programmes and work as an instructor. In 1960, all Soviet technicians were abruptly recalled. Dr. Klochko, who escaped to the West in 1961, has written perhaps the most authentic account to date of the heyday of the Sino-Soviet co-operation and of the tensions which built up to produce the rift.

Translated from the Russian by ANDREW McANDREW

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**HOLLIS & CARTER**

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# THE LITERARY SCENE IN RUMANIA

*Edgar Reichman*

CULTURAL life in the countries of East Europe over the last twenty years has followed a tortuous course, sown with mines, over arid wastes scorched by the war and fissured by abrupt changes and revolutions. Today, the scene is strewn with the corpses abandoned by history, inundated by the rising tide of new generations. The bleaching skeletons of Zhdanovite aberrations remain, a grim warning to writers who try to force the pace.

For some time past, exchanges with the West have been more active, though often hampered by practical, more than ideological considerations. Still, another freeze-up is still quite possible: the repression that followed the Polish October and the revolt of the intellectuals in Budapest lingers vividly in many memories. It is harder to win a fertile peace than to wage a cold war: but, after all, a climate of peace, even if only temperate, is more propitious for culture.

For some twenty years, the works of the official novelists never came into conflict with the institutions of the country. What is more, some of the second-rank writers have become—some still are—reliable political instruments of those in power. To an attentive outside observer, the literary landscape of Rumania might seem to be populated by intellectual 'dead souls' who have never dared to discuss dogma; the development of whose intelligence and sensibility was arrested at limits decreed by authorities.

Six or seven publishing houses, four or five big reviews, innumerable 'houses of creation' (which would see nothing to envy in the cultural centres of Royaumont or Cérisy); editions which commonly begin at several thousand copies, even for beginners; books sold at reasonable prices, and a 'school for writers'—all this bears ample witness to the importance the Government attaches to cultural development. For years, however, the literary 'productivity' bore no relation to this great deployment of means; it remained poor and without brilliance. The authors were denied any right to reflect, in their works, upon the tormented reality that they witnessed. Hence a general impression, in the West, especially after the revolt of the Polish and Hungarian intellectuals, that in spite of the ever-present influence of French culture in its intellectual circles, Rumania remained the most insulated, the least de-Stalinised country of the whole communist *glacis*. The paucity of information that reached us from Bucarest, the obvious mediocrity of the publications and the quiescence of the intellectuals, seemed fully to justify this view.

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Still, if we wrote off, as definitively compromised, the subtle and refined aesthetes who, at the price of certain concessions, have so long been able to work in the solitude of their libraries; and if we also underestimated the work of younger writers untrammelled by a political past, it would not be easy to describe the complex literary phenomenon presented by Rumania today. It is true that the resistance put up by the older generation of writers never took such spectacular forms as it did in Poland or Hungary. But let us not forget that the intellectuals who, in Rumania, were the first to raise the alarm against the Zhdanovite dogmatism were nearly all old communists: the positions they courageously took up were strengthened by this, and it gave them a wider audience among their comrades.

Compromised, if not by some too open flirtation with the old regime, at least by the 'crime of non-assistance' to the Communist Party when it was weak and outlawed, many of the old generation of writers lacked —in the leaders' eyes—the moral authority to justify any public action against the dogmatic excesses of this Party when it had come to power. The novelist Alexander Jar—an old militant of the Left, it is true, who had proved his mettle in the underground in Spain and in the French Resistance—was the only speaker, at a public meeting of the Union of Writers, who showed the courage openly to condemn the constant, tiresome interference of politics in literature and the boring consequences of it. Jar's protest was made seven years ago: since then he seems to have disappeared from the literary scene. The 'daring' truths he told were no secrets to anyone, but no one, even of the youngest intellectuals, ventured to raise the question again. De-politicised by fear, most of the younger writers doubtless thought it wiser to wait quietly for better days, and in spite of particularly difficult conditions, to find creative scope without touching upon topics that were taboo. We shall see presently to what extent this 'disengagement' of the younger generation has been good for Rumanian literature.

*The 'Classics'*

Those of the old guard had at first to retire into their ivory towers and listen to the thunder of Zhdanovite criticism till it was safe to come out and to appear, here and there—at first with many low bows to the official conventions—with poems, criticism, and even with novels. These astute literati, the old 'mandarins', have prudently, with modesty, patience, and also with a truly Latin irony, known how to bide their time, but also how to exert a certain influence over the beginners. The poet, Tudor Arghezi, the novelist Michail Sadoveanu (though he sympathised with the regime from the first) and the critic Georges Calinescu seem to me the most representative figures among them.

Arghezi, now 84 years of age, is known in France by a collection of his poems—not, alas! very well translated. His youth was stormy—a crisis of mysticism; years of vagabondage in France and Switzerland;

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numberless occupations, until finally he returned to Bucarest and embarked upon a literary career, but outside any of the existing literary currents. No doubt his uprootedness—Arghezi is an unfrocked priest—goes far to explain an aggressiveness so imperious that his poems have always been pervaded by it. The audacity both of inspiration and of means first surprised the wider public. Under his pen the Rumanian langauge undergoes a veritable mutation—a violation, according to orthodox critics: his vocabulary is enriched with words disallowed by literary convention; syntax is broken, and the previous relations within the sentence are renewed by unusual combinations. Between the two wars Arghezi finally imposed himself by sheer force on the times and the public: his work reflected the heartbreak of a society evolving at a forced pace; but it did so in a vein that retained the imprint of his half-peasant, half-suburban vitality. No doubt it is growing awareness of the modern world in contrast with the patriarchal countryside that fills this poetry with bitterness and frustration; but there is also irony and, when he drops the bitter tone of insult and invective, Arghezi finds accents of a rare ingenuousness for the depiction of children, plants and animals.

In the years 1947–48, his work was censured as ambiguous and pernicious; in the words of an unoriginal critic, it expressed 'the decomposition of bourgeois art' and came from a mind 'hostile to the positions of socialist realism'. For some time the poet had to keep silence, but about ten years ago his verse began to be published again. At first very conventional, Arghezi's new poems irritated those who had formerly admired him; to some of his old public his commitment to the official line looked like a real betrayal; others justified the position he had now taken up, as the 'spirit of homage' which Arghezi had shown throughout his literary career, with but few exceptions. The poet himself thought of his return to the contemporary literary life of his country as a civic duty. Today, his poems reflect a certain lassitude, and the presence of an obsession as old as life itself—that of death. There is a breath of nostalgia, not at all of the 'Slav' kind (vague yearnings are foreign to this poet); they have also a perfume of sadness, but this, by its very intensity, becomes stimulating.

Lately deceased, the novelist Michail Sadoveanu will remain, like Arghezi, a leading figure in Rumanian literary history. His work, some of which dates back to before 1900, is vast, and reflects all that was once most characteristic of Rumania: the life of the peasants, the manners and customs of almost primitive communities in the unending solitudes of the country, the irremediable sadness of the little provincial towns. Sadoveanu knew better than anyone how to express the hidden meanings of the Rumanian landscape, the majestic poetry of the heights, the monotonous murmur of the grasses of the plains, the mysterious music of the forests and rivers. The density of his characters, rude but of a complexity out of all proportion to the undeveloped state of their surroundings, redeems his historical novels from the kind of provinciality

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we often feel in, for example, certain works of Sienkiewicz. Nearer to Turgenev than to Gogol, Sadoveanu carries the reader with him by the magic of his phrases, enchants him with the unexampled wealth of his sensory perception.

If, in his last novels, the need for concessions had not gone so far to compromise the authenticity of his talent, Sadoveanu could have become an eloquent witness of the dramatic happenings to the Rumanian peasantry in his time. As it was, rallying to the regime from the beginning, Sadoveanu fell into the snare of a simplified 'realism', garnished with *images d'Epinal*. Into his last works he introduces, with a puerile enthusiasm, symbolic characters—proletarians, communists, poor people and 'enemies'—into which he could not breathe the intense life that animates his earlier heroes. Later on, some young man like Marin Preda, less attached to the traditional clichés, will take over the message of Sadoveanu and inform it with a new personal experience, perhaps less enthusiastic, but also less schematic.

Georges Calinescu, a literary critic and historian of universal erudition, is still, without doubt, for all his sixty-four years, the unruly and often indiscreet child in Rumanian literary life. No less in his learned researches than in his passion for polemics and his novel-writing (which is not juvenile at all), his ferocious candour, and a mock-naïveté often combined with a real ingenuousness, make him the most baroque figure in a literary scene rendered generally tedious by force of prudence. His novel, *The Enigma of Ottilia*, which appeared between the wars, had the same fascination for Rumanian intellectuals as the *Ferdydurke* had for young Poles. These two works belong to widely separate traditions, yet the artistic vision is the same. In the guise of a classic, Balzac-like narrative, and with a hallucinating vividness, Calinescu depicts ineffectual heroes, adolescents refusing to attain the age of reason, developing according to fantastic impulse in a society doomed to slow disintegration. Against this morbific, more and more disquieting background, he outlines the figure of the secretive young girl, Ottilia: there is a disturbing ambiguity about her, right to the end.

Far more moving, it seems to me, is the story of *Poor Joanide*, told by Calinescu in a novel that appeared ten years ago. An architect of genius loses his two children in the fascist putsch; and he realises with despair that the political conditions of his time are unfavourable for long-term creative effort. The characters are all the more real because they exemplify no theme, all the more convincing because they are not trying to convince anyone. The work strikes roots into a reality much deeper than that of the current history which is too often officially recommended as the model. This is doubtless why it was coldly received in those same quarters, but with acclamation by the general public. The appearance of *Poor Joanide* in 1955 was an early sign of the 'thaw' in Rumanian letters.

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In *The Black Chest of Drawers* Calinescu followed up the story of the characters of *Poor Joanide* into the years just after the inauguration of the new regime, and found himself facing a delicate question. He must either decline to make any concessions to the censorship, in which case his work would have had little chance of publication; or he could consent to certain modifications, at the risk of loss of its aesthetic value. Calinescu chose the second alternative: and if in so doing he disappointed lovers of his best work, this novel does retain its negligent beauty. The balance of the work is no doubt impaired; one has an uncomfortable feeling that the novelist is trying hard, at the cost of some fastidious verbosity, to make some characters more 'positive'. The tone nevertheless remains unaltered, tragic yet droll, ironical, desperate, and yet marvellously detached. Decayed aristocrats, fascists, communists, silly old women and gentle crackpots are hurried through these pages packed with life. Joanide, the 'engaged' intellectual, maintains, with his lucidity and humour, a somewhat sad detachment and a critical acuteness which sometimes bring him very close to us, likable and sympathetic.

*A Crypto-Boyar at Large*

The strange destiny of Petru Dumitriu exemplifies the divided mind that can be produced in a young culture in prolonged isolation and under too much constraint. In his own country Dumitriu published two or three novels of exceptional quality, which, in spite of their insincerity, or because of it, made him the leading figure among the younger Rumanian writers. His novels, translated into several languages and favourably received among Western critics, looked like a pitiless settling of accounts against the classes dispossessed by the regime. But the hidden meaning of these irritating novels, particularly of *The Boyars*, escaped even the most subtle and vigilant official critics, who saw nothing in them but a penetrating piece of debunking. For all that, Dumitriu had always identified himself with the classes he was called upon to condemn, and he divulged his secret to a good many of the public who, like himself, cherished unavowable nostalgias. Much like Proust's famous hero, Swann, the novelist had a passionate love for aristocrats, and in communist Rumania Dumitriu was always a crypto-Boyar. Such duplicity was too much for the man or the artist. Three years ago, the public learned with astonishment that the novelist had decided to live in the West. I was myself surprised at this, for personally I had imagined that Dumitriu was rather like an Ehrenburg—clever, turbulent and a wanderer, but a subtle and sensitive ambassador, a link between two worlds fatefully torn apart—one who hoped, by the patient exercise of his talent, to bring happier days to his country; the longed-for days when frontiers would be open, fears dispelled, and 'cultural norms' finally abolished. Much more than his love of the Boyars, it was the

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sluggishness and ever-possible reversibility of cultural policy that finally led to his decision.

The first novel he wrote abroad, *Summons to the Last Judgment*, struck me as allusive, sly, incomprehensible to a Western public. The writer was trying to debunk the Rumanian bureaucracy, but those are people Dumitriu does not like, and never did; they cannot therefore have the substance of his cherished Boyars. I had written, two years ago, that once he got away from concentration camp problems, Dumitriu would no doubt give us some more consistent novels. I was partly mistaken, for the second novel he produced in the West, *Incognito*, is still full of that obsession, though it has density and power. *Incognito* tells the story of three brothers who set out in search of a god in a de-sacralised world, which is that of the East—and ours too. This is a book whose meaning goes far beyond the frontiers of contemporaneous Rumania, or those of the communist world in general.

*Summons to the Last Judgment* is still dependent upon a relatively limited experience, that of the installation in power of a new class, under conditions which are after all peculiar to Rumania. *Incognito* reflects, upon a far vaster scale, the discomforts of change; yet the frame of things persists—modern Rumania, the prey of Byzantine struggles for power, the scene of social upheavals in which the heroes are victims. Yet the angle of vision remains the same: these are Koestler's characters Balkanised, or Dr Zhivago wandering in the Danube plains; we see the individual—saint or swine or opportunist—caught in seismic social convulsions that engulf him.

Written in quite another vein is *Western Extremity*, published lately by the Editions du Seuil. It transports us into an imaginary country somewhere in Northern Europe—a rich, peaceful country, a land of nightmare nevertheless. Amsterdam? Antwerp? Hamburg? The reader who is warned recognises Frankfurt, the city of steel and glass in which the novelist and his wife have found refuge. This is a fine, rugged, stern novel. Here, man finds himself no longer opposed to the social machine, but to his own fellows. Tormenter and victim are involved in relations much more subtle than before, for they are not now driven by social pressures, but by primordial impulses: hatred and pride, love and fear, aggression and frustration. A veritable chamber of horrors is revealed in a searching light of compassion. Of this mysterious, distant Occident—which remains so throughout the novel, even for us who live in it—Dumitriu has chosen to show us only the uncertain boundaries, the 'limiting cases'. The search for 'something else' and the most authentic despair possess the minds of marginal, pathetic characters who, for all their improbability are much more true to life than his typical heroes of earlier days. Industrialists and business men, the colonisers and the colonised, women of the world and old rakes, anarchists and political exiles, exiled invalids and adolescents move slowly, like mechanical dolls, through a world smelling of sulphur,

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petrol and Parisian perfumes. It is the Dies Irae and also the Marquis de Sade; *The Lower Depths* but also *L'Histoire d'O*.

*The Moral Question*

The present position of the new generation of Rumanian intellectuals found some expression on the occasion of a conference on 'the writer and morality' at Lahti in Finland, which brought together writers, critics and men of letters from East and West, both 'engaged' and 'above the battle'. There, the official representative of Rumania, N. Tertulian, courageously asserted that the moral function of art should be understood as that of 'disalienation', and that this implied the negation of all conformism and of every moral norm that 'oppresses, enslaves or mutilates'. Replying to Jean Bloch-Michel, who separated art from morality in principle, Tertulian added that the moral responsibility of the artist had nothing to do with the degrading conformism or spiritual coercion justly denounced by the French man of letters. In Tertulian's view, the artist's 'engagement' requires of him a critical attitude towards anything that 'abases, impoverishes or humiliates the human person'.

Those words should rejoice everyone, in Rumania or elsewhere, who still passionately believes in the magically 'disalienating' virtue of creative work. It is the more regrettable that Tertulian went straight on to concede, as inalienable, the right of literary criticism to judge every literary work by moral criteria. Tertulian ought to have remembered that in his own country, moral standards, like those of music, poetry and, it would seem, happiness are questions of state. Of necessity, therefore, criticism exerts 'moral coercion' over the creators; who, if they are not to succumb to its strictures, are often obliged to take refuge in conformity and become platitudinous—admittedly, in inverse ratio to their talent.

This criticism has subjected the few dozen novels published in the last few years to a 'scientific' classification which of itself is enough to discourage any authentic talent, even the least audacious. This is the way the literary critic, D. Micu (who in other works has displayed a rich and varied erudition) proceeds in his monograph on *The Contemporary Rumanian Novel* (Espla, Bucarest, 1959). He does not scruple to divide these novels arbitrarily into groups, under the following chapter-headings: 'Novels of the Socialist Transformation of Agriculture'; 'Novels of the Growth of Socialist Agriculture'; 'Novels of Labour'; Factory Novels' and 'The Novel upon other Sectors of Socialist Work'.

Tertulian cannot be unaware that this same criticism, to which he so generously allows moral authority as of right, has, for the last fifteen years, been demanding works that reflect, first, the 'class-struggle', secondly, the 'collectivisation of the land', and thirdly, the 'awakening of the socialist consciousness' in the naturally 'hesitant' and 'unstable' intellectuals. I fear that, of the beginners indubitably loyal to the new social and economic constitution of their country, an increasing number may think that such a view of intellectual duty commits them to much

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more than the famous 'responsibility of the artist' proclaimed by Tertulian at Lahti. Indeed, it puts a question-mark against the very function of the artist—his art. By putting much of the infinite variety of his inner experience out of bounds, it denies him the right to select themes of madness, escapism or dream, but no less surely those of the realities, sometimes sordid, sometimes comic or tragic, masked by the monotony of daily life; such 'moral censure', it seems to me, obliges the writer to have recourse to an elementary, boy-scout ethic of a deplorable conventionality. And indeed, for years past, the only outlet for young writers burning to see their work in print has been the production of moralistic novelettes of about the same standard as the serials in *Confidences* or *Good Housekeeping*.

*Brilliant Exceptions*

In the end, the sense of proportion and love of their craft that animate the majority of the young Rumanian intellectuals, more and more of whom are becoming managers of cultural publications or publishing houses, may yet divert literary energies in new directions.

Marin Preda, a man of the peasant world, began to write in 1942, but did not publish his first volume of prose until 1948. Sadoveanu and others before him seemed to have drunk the sources of peasant inspiration dry; but Preda, borrowing methods of psychological insight from the classics of world literature, restores the rural universe to us by his striking originality. His characters, like those in Sholokhov's *Quiet Flows the Don*, are no mere marionettes of 'social forces', 'negative' or 'positive', but are living embodiments, within the framework of their tormented times, of eternal human truths. We feel this in his great novel, *The Morometzi*, with its suggestive account of the Rumanian village at the beginning of the second world war. In this setting Preda analyses the drama of free contemplation, the attempt to escape into dreams, of a strange peasant who, in spite of himself, is finally carried away by the savagery of history.

The work of the novelist Julia Soare, *The Callaf Family*, is of a very different kind, but of no less artistic power. The critics timidly compared this novel to Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* and reproached the novelist, though not too acrimoniously, for not having got beyond the stage of 'bourgeois realism'. I do not know whether Julia Soare has produced any more of the great series of novels she meant to write on the Callaf family: I see only the excellent translations modestly signed by her in the review, *Secolul 20*. But what she has already published shows a talent well above that of current novel production. Panaït Istrati, too, once applied himself to a similar task, in *The Thüringer*. But the heroes created by that sublime vagabond did not attain the terrifying grandeur of the Callafs.

The most original of these cavaliers in love with the magic of words is still Eugene Barbu, the 'angry young man' who at once captured

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the attention of the public by *The Discharge*, a picaresque novel of a rare beauty, which seemed to announce the appearance of another Istrati in this unusually orderly realm of letters. In a slangy, disconcerting style not altogether unlike that of Queneau, *The Dicharge* describes the life of the outcasts who were born and multiplied and murdered one another around the garbage pits of the stinking suburbs of the Bucarest of old. Barbu's characters, thieves, receivers, prostitutes and little folk crushed under the dullness of the daily round, move in the half-light of a cold world, an explosive mixture of suburban aggressiveness and peasant cunning, untouched by any moral, social or political considerations. That is what exposed the author to the angry reprobation of the censors. 'Dangerous literature, anti-social in tendency', 'sordid naturalism', 'a book hostile to the efforts of socialist education'—these strictures were typical of most of the reviews published in the literary journals, especially in the provincial towns. The most open-minded of the Bucarest critics hailed it immediately as one of the most considerable events in the country's literary history; but after being cautioned by the official journal of the Party, they said no more about it.

The authorities, disquieted no doubt by the unreassuring results that followed upon the liberalisation of letters in Poland and Hungary, approached Barbu with a frightening gentleness and advised him to give up counting upon miracles and to turn to more uplifting themes. And in *The Road to the North* he did attempt to produce a spacious, epic creation based on the struggle of the Rumanian communists. But, as the critic I. Vitner wrote, 'This novel has everything needed to make it a vast social and historical fresco, except . . . the temperament of the author'. The artificiality of the situations, rather than the characters, and the lack of identification of a highly original artistic vision with the (required) content of the work, caused it to fail.

In a recent book, *The Creation of the World*, a strange personality makes his appearance in Rumanian prose writing—i.e., the working man. And very different he is from the 'worker' so prominent in the iconography of the propaganda departments. Here he is, for once, as he is in reality: human, liable to failure, not always comfortably installed in life and often unhappy. 'This', wrote the critic V. Ardeleanu in the review *Steaua*, 'is a long way from those preposterous workmen who seem to know all there is to know, who take action with a disarming coolness, uttering ready-made ideas.' And Barbu has an important influence over the younger prose writers such as D. R. Popesco, Traian Filip, Radu Cosasu, Theodore Mazilu and V. Rebreanu, who publish acid, mordant tales, and for a long while have been unveiling, candidly and without timidity, the not very edifying life of the simple people.

*Poetry and Mysticism*

Eugene Barbu is also the moving spirit of a review for young writers, *Luceafarul*, and of a literary circle. Some two hundred young people

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meet there on Tuesdays to read and discuss poetic productions which are generally of a high level and are more and more rarely concerned with anything political. This group is called after N. Labis, who died in 1957 at the age of 21, when he had already published lyrical work which, in the new Rumanian poetry, has given him the status of Rimbaud his inspirer. This Rumanian poetry deserves a whole study in itself, for its present development is most significant. The poems of Nichita Stanescu, Ana Blandiana and Cesar Baltag, who are all very young and are 'engaged' writers, are nevertheless far removed from the militant spirit that is still, alas! exacted by certain directors of conscience. But the days when 'the social commandment' had the prior claim seem to be well and truly over: some poets already canonised—Dan Desliu and Nina Cassian are examples—have abandoned the commonplace suavities in which they used to clothe hollow and sonorous abstractions. Their poems, of an intense gravity, ripened and enriched by often painful experience, are at last releasing personal feelings: nostalgias, joys that are often sombre, sometimes even an indefinable anguish induced by an increasingly individualised vision of life.

The mystical poetry of Lucien Blaga, an 'exile at home' like Pasternak and recently deceased without having renounced anything of his intellectual position, has been published, though not without delay. For the young intellectuals, this is an event of great importance. Certain critics have had to display prodigies of astute dialectic to justify the metaphysical implications of this work, for it is hard indeed to dissociate its aesthetic value from its philosophic content. In Blaga's vision, expressed in a manner comparable to that of some German expressionists, religion, civilisation, and culture together reflect man in his wholeness. This man of Rumania is as timeless as the landscape, the forest, the village and the sky, a changeless, mythic being whose perfect and transcendent beauty defies history. The same critics, underestimating the public they think to educate, try desperately to explain that Lucian Blaga was only rejecting the alienation of technical civilisation, and that his 'reactionary', 'defeatist', and 'mystical' attitudes were due to incomprehension of the class struggle, and, finally, that his nostalgic lyricism reflected the imperialist evolution of bourgeois society—allegations which, far from convincing the younger writers, only repel them further from such academic and conservative thinking. Blaga's works, like those of Botta, Vinea or Voiculesco, who never drew upon current political realities for inspiration, are much discussed in cultural circles, and take effect upon those whose writings were for the private drawer until yesterday, but are now being published in the literary reviews.

*A Ready-made Choice?*

Now that the idea of the communist bloc as 'monolithic' is a thing of the past, Rumania is perplexed. She goes her own way, however,

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trying to reconcile the contradictory tendencies, keeping on good terms with both Chinese dogmatists and revisionist Jugoslavs, gradually extricating herself from the Soviet influence and beginning a dialogue with the West. It is hard to foresee just how far the Rumanian leaders will be able to go in quest of emancipation or the degree to which the literary life may be changed. At present, when Rumania is seeking, and gradually finding a political and national identity, the cultural options presented to her men of letters are beginning to be more clearly visible. These writers must either confine their outlook within a dusty provincialism, and exalt the regenerative virtues of a national communism —in which case they need do nothing but substitute one dogma for another, and will again have to fabricate novels and poems as others manufacture sausages or tractors—or else, true to their own spiritual vocation, they must go on trying to make an original contribution to European culture, which means also assimilating its values, which hitherto have been accessible only to the few well-informed intellectuals.

It is almost customary, in the West, to interpret the publication of articles in the literary press of the East on Joyce, Kafka or Proust, as a sign of revival and liberalisation. And we are all waiting with a legitimate eagerness to see what influence these important authors may have upon young writers educated until now in the spirit of 'socialist realism'. But in a popular democracy, although the appearance of critical articles on such outstanding Western authors is encouraging in itself, a wide circulation of their works would take on quite another meaning, and that is not the case in Rumania. The majority of Western observers are unaware that in that country the cultural elites have managed, by hook or by crook, to keep contact with much Western writing. During the Stalin period, it is true, the creators of the modern novel were never mentioned in public discussion or named in print. All the same, *Ulysses* could have been seen on the shelves of certain private libraries beside the fat volumes of *Quiet Flows the Don*; and *The Trial*, *Metamorphosis* or *A la Recherche du Temps perdu* between the poems of Mayakovsky and novels by Eugene Barbu or Petru Dumitriu. Those 'heretical' works have long been circulating more or less under the counter; and no one ever hesitated to express admiration, reserve or mere incomprehension in regard to them.

Speaking of the influence of foreign writers upon current Rumanian prose in the course of a recent interview, the academician P. Perpessius said that Proust had undoubtedly left his mark on a number of novelists of the previous generation, and that among the newer ones Marin Preda in particular owed much to the Proustian psychological analysis. 'Just as people used to talk of Heinrich and of Thomas Mann, of Hemingway and Galsworthy, now there is more and more talk in Rumania about Camus, the disturbing author of *The Plague*.' These words, over Perpessius's signature in the *Gazeta Literara* of 19 July 1963, are followed a little further on by: 'I know only by hearsay what the

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authors of the new wave (of novel-writing) have experienced, but I am certain that all aesthetic experience, if it is assimilated with a critical sense, can only be beneficial'.

Indeed, that dense novel by Camus, with all its ambiguity, has just been translated by no other than Marin Preda, and published in Bucarest where it is having a tremendous success. In the August number of *Contemporanul*, E. A. Baconsky wrote: 'It is difficult to read *The Plague* without understanding that those rats, like Ionesco's rhinoceros, really represent much more than an ordinary accident . . . not to let oneself be duped by appearances, by perfidious euphemisms or illusions; that is the message of Camus'. At the beginning of the year this same Baconsky, a courageous critic and a poet of talent, signed some articles (again in that otherwise deadly boring periodical, the *Contemporanul*), on Kafka, on Joyce, and more recently on Becket. Apart from a few abstract statements that keep his appreciation of those authors within conventional limits, the wealth of information in these studies will facilitate the reading public's approach to the works in question—if, one day, the authorities decide to allow their publication.

But already the appearance of a periodical, *Secolul 20*, intended above all to give Rumanian readers an idea of foreign writers, and the production, for the first time on the Bucarest stage, of a play by Eugène Ionesco, *Rhinoceros*, are favourable auguries for the future. True enough, twenty years of isolation, political conditioning and the reactions it arouses, still prevent the critics from rightly understanding Ionesco's plays. For instance, certain critics, choosing the easiest way out by writing from a narrowly political standpoint, interpreted *Rhinoceros* as a violent satire against fascism. And it must be admitted that, during the first production of this play in Germany, the spectators recognised themselves in the characters who yield to the totalitarian temptation; it can also be said that the play reflects the dramatist's feelings at the time when he left Rumania in 1938, seeing how many people were joining the Iron Guard. But in discussing this point with some Rumanians on a visit to Paris (where they are increasingly numerous) I learned, with little surprise, that Ionesco's great success with a Rumanian public hungry for spectacles of an audacious undertone was simply the anti-totalitarian tendency of his play. That interpretation lends itself to ambiguity, and strangely limits Ionesco's message, for 'rhinocerity' is not only a characteristic of totalitarianism either 'right' or 'left'; it represents above all the most aggressive kinds of stupidity and everyday conformity. Martin Esslin, in an essay on the theatre of the absurd, indicated the real meaning of this work which, I fear, escapes the Rumanian critics: 'What this piece conveys is the absurdity of defiance as well as of conformism; it is the tragedy of the individualist who cannot join in with the happy mass of the less sensitive, the experience of the artist who feels he is an outcast; which is also the theme of writers like Kafka and Thomas Mann'. Is not that the uncomfortable condition

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of creative artists in Rumania, and of many others all over the world? Ionesco's other plays, *The Chairs*, *The Bald Cantatrice* and *The Lesson* are still unknown in Rumania; and the reservations expressed by certain theatre managers prevent—for how much longer?—their appearance on the stage.

* * *

Eugène Ionesco today, yesterday Panaït Istrati and Tristan Tzara, are all more or less acclaimed in Rumanian letters. Recently, at Bucarest, a collection of poems by Benjamin Fondana has appeared—the work of a sensitive and delicate poet who lived a long while in Paris and whose tormented existence came to an end at Auschwitz. Tomorrow, perhaps Cioran and Mircea Eliade will be made known in Rumania; men who live or have lived far from their native land and now, like Conrad, Bunin, Nabokov or Gombrowicz, belong to the culture of the world.

To attain that status is doubtless the aspiration of many a young Rumanian novelist and poet. Some of their elders—Blaga, Calinescu or Arghezi—if translated with talent and intelligence into languages of wide circulation, would be sure to do so. In March 1964, a little before his death, the academician, T. Vianu, representing Rumania at Unesco, publicly declared that at heart he was a citizen of the world, even more than of his mother country. Nevertheless, a month later, Michai Beniuc, the President of the Union of Rumanian Writers, made a different declaration: 'The Rumanian public will be able henceforth to become familiar with the works of Western writers; but we shall not abandon any of our ideological principles in regard to the problems of literary creation'.

The contrast remains between Rumania's relatively bold departures in foreign political and economic policy and a rigid control over internal cultural developments. But the writers continue their cautious efforts to lighten the doctrinal pressures upon literature.

Since they cannot hope to have the concept of 'socialist realism' officially abjured, writers have been trying to dilute its content. For instance, the critic D. Micu (mentioned above) wrote last October in support of the thesis of a French communist philosopher, R. Garaudy, that: 'All expressions of authentic art can be set in a framework of realism', and that realism should not be understood in a restricted sense. Such watering-down of the dogma had previously been denounced by the President of the Writers' Union, and Micu was now contradicted by Ion Pascadi in the *Gazeta Literara*, who said it was a revision that would make the concept of 'realism' meaningless. But Micu was joined by Manolescu, in writing an article on contemporary poetry in the *Secolul 20*, where they claimed the quality of realism for all writing that was infused with 'the breath of the modern world'—a view which could not be generally approved without the ultimate dissolution of all that the concept of realism meant to the Party. They even praised a recent book of poems as true to the principle of 'materialism' because the author

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wrote in terms of the sun, fire, water, earth, etc., which are forms of 'matter'. (If they accepted that, the authorities would have to grant an enthusiastic *imprimatur* to T. S. Eliot's 'Four Quartets'!)

There are also signs that writers are more openly disregarding the rule that they must show political purpose in their work. To be convicted of being a-political used to be a crime that could lead to exclusion from all publication. Now, this sin of omission is increasingly tolerated. E. Barbu's group, referred to above, is not threatened; its members' works are even published in the *Luceafarul*. Barbu's novel *The Pit*, hounded out of the bookshops in 1956, was reprinted last year, well received and its earlier critics condemned as narrow-minded. The reputations of several writers once officially condemned are being reviewed and revised, even that of Hurmuz who died in the twenties after introducing surrealism to Rumania; and the importance of some poets commended by the regime has been questioned.

In the theatrical press there have been open protests against the official demand for 'positive heroes' and 'production' themes, which are said to 'interest no one' and to disqualify the Rumanian theatre from competition in the international field.

It remains true that most of the writing on aesthetic theory published in the reviews is such as might have been approved by Zhdanov. The symptoms of dissent amount to very little in themselves: but the way in which the writers work gradually and hopefully to secure wider areas for aesthetic manoeuvre has been compared with the Rumanian Government's canny pursuit of its policy of disengagement from the Russian hegemony—by skilful alternations between complaisance and independence.

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# 1930—1932

## *Some Vignettes of Soviet Life*

***Philip E. Mosely***

IT was in retrospect a piece of great good fortune for me to be in Soviet Russia in those particular years, from July 1930 to April 1932. Visiting Moscow only two years earlier would have brought me in touch with a very different stage of Soviet development, the twilight of the New Economic Policy. One or two years after my departure Soviet people were being pressed into the rigid pattern of Stalinism. Thus, by coming to Moscow earlier or later I would have missed the richness, so important to an understanding of Russian history and Soviet life, of the contradictory forces within both forced change and resistance to change that made up the drama and strain of the first five-year plan.

Nothing in my past experience or reading had equipped me, a New Englander of twenty-four, to understand the Russia I was about to encounter. And yet I had read far more about Russia, past and present, than most of my contemporaries. As early as 1923, while a Harvard freshman, I had inflicted on my instructor a hundred-page essay on Russia between the revolutions of February and October. Through private lessons and conversation I had acquired a basic command of the language. Russian history had been one of my 'fields' for the Ph.D. orals at Harvard. But history read and history lived are on different planes of psychological reality.

In my study of Russia's past I had been especially impressed by the drastic redirection Peter the Great had imposed on its institutions and outlook. Yet Alexei Tolstoy's *Peter I*, which I was to see in 1931 in a breath-taking performance of the Second Moscow Art Theatre, was still being written. At the same time I was almost as much interested in revolutionary as in earlier Russia. In the *New York Times*, *Foreign Affairs*, *The Nation* and other journals I had followed closely the reports by Walter Duranty, Louis Fischer, William Henry Chamberlin and other deeply informed interpreters of Soviet development. However, none of this background had really prepared me to understand the impact of the second Russian Revolution on living people.

By the time I arrived in Russia the customs and outlook of the NEP period were fading rapidly. Its disappearance was felt immediately in the little essentials of daily life. After I had begun to settle down in Moscow, ready to begin my research on Russian diplomacy of the 1830s, I was able at first to buy an occasional hundred grams of butter at the ramshackle stand of a *chastnik* (private trader). This was lucky for me as it took several weeks to unravel the red-tape and provide me with a ration card. Later, when I had the precious card but still no butter, I would again have been glad to buy some from the

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*chastnik* at sixteen rubles a kilogram, quadruple the official price. But by then the small trader had disappeared from his corner, and the state-run shops had butter only irregularly, and then usually only for ' heavy workers '.

In the autumn of 1930 one of my two pairs of shoes was nearly swallowed up in the forced transition from NEP to embryonic ' socialism '. My shoes, I soon found, were wearing through the soles far more rapidly than at home, what with the rough cobblestones of Moscow streets and my preference for walking wherever possible rather than waiting interminably on an off-chance of wedging my way into jam-packed street-cars. So one day I took the worse-worn pair to a municipally run cooperative, only to confront a door locked and posted with a sign, ' Orders accepted from two to four ' on such-and-such a day. When I returned on the appointed date, a line of sixty-odd citizens was waiting and shuffling forward from time to time, as the sole clerk on duty took about ten minutes to make out each order. Eventually I had to drop out of the *ochered* in order to keep an even more urgent appointment.

On the following reception day I came early, and after a wait of two hours the clerk began writing out the order. However, when he told me to return for the shoes in two months, I realised that by then I would have walked through the soles of my other pair, so I took the shoes away with me.

That evening, when I explained my predicament to some Russian friends, one of them volunteered to take me to a private cobbler whom he knew. We went down long, dark corridors, upstairs and then down, across two courtyards, in other words, through the maze of a post-1812 Moscow apartment-house warren. Finally we rapped at the unmarked door of a two-room apartment, where there was no sign, inside or out, of a cobbler's trade. But my friend was known to the cobbler, who cheerfully agreed to have my shoes repaired by the next evening, naturally at twice the state price.

When I returned the next evening, the cobbler's wife greeted me with both excited concern and typically Russian warmth. The tax-collector, she explained volubly, had called again that very day and had confiscated all her husband's tools and supplies, together with the shoes on hand for repair; he himself had gone that day to find work in a factory. Just when I had become convinced that my shoes had also been confiscated along with the last remnants of NEP, the cobbler's wife stood a rickety chair on a sturdy table and climbed aloft to reach behind a huge wardrobe. Emerging with my shoes, neatly repaired, in her triumphant hand, she explained, ' When I saw what the tax-collector was up to, I hid your shoes because you are a foreigner, and here they are! ' Thus I became a participant-observer in the final extinction of the ways of NEP!

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WHAT was far more important of course was that the relatively relaxed, secure, open, and cosmopolitan atmosphere of Russian intelligentsia life was also fading month by month under the pressure of the new orthodoxy. Even so, in those years, which now seem so far away, there was no need to explain to educated Russians, whether communists or the contrary, the meaning of individual freedom, the right of personal judgment, or the institutions of representative democracy. Whether they rejected them, or cherished them from a hopeless distance, Russians knew what they were and what they meant. Twenty and thirty years later a visitor to the Soviet Union had to go back to elementary notions of high-school civics to explain the nature of free political competition, freedom of association, the role of pressure groups, and all the other institutions and customs the West takes for granted.

The vanishing of the atmosphere of relative relaxation was an uneven process. In the field of economics, which impinged directly on decisions about the goals and tempo of the first five-year plan, the persecution of many talented and patriotic experts came to a focus early, in the second of the show-trials (*pokazatelny protsess*), that of the so-called Industrial Party (*Prompartiia*), in November 1930. Through Louis Fischer's kindness in lending me his correspondent's ticket I was able for one day to watch and listen to the proceedings from the first row in the Hall of Columns. Here the technical intelligentsia, liberal and often radical in its pre-revolutionary sympathies, was being placed on trial by the party leadership, which chose this way to shift to their slender shoulders the blame for its own decisions and miscalculations. 'Bourgeois-restorationist wreckers' (*vrediteli*) were, the party press screamed, solely responsible for the vast burden of suffering that had descended like a pall over city and village alike.

The trial served the party's purpose. All intellectuals and specialists with pre-revolutionary education or experience were thereby declared suspect, and each of them had to wonder when the purge would reach out for him. Still, the habit of murmuring protest was too strong to subside overnight. Many Muscovites were indignant at the compulsory torchlight processions of students, mobilised from the higher institutes under the watchful eye of the Komsomol, which paraded past the Hall of Columns with banners demanding the death penalty for Ramzin, Chaianov, and other talented engineers and economists. People were especially indignant over reports that Professor Ramzin's daughter had been compelled under threat of exile to join the rest of her institute in demanding her father's death, and that his wife had been offered the privilege of denouncing and divorcing her husband in order to save her own life. 'Even Nicholas the hangman', they said, 'allowed the wives of the Decembrists to plead for mercy to their husbands and to accompany them into Siberian exile.' In bitter jest they asked, 'Do you like the way Kachalov (then a leading actor of the Moscow Art Theatre) plays Ramzin?'

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In what was perhaps a lingering and soon-outmoded reluctance to apply the death penalty, the court (or the Kremlin) sentenced the defendants to various terms of imprisonment. Rumour soon had it that some of them were conducted each day from Butyrki prison to their laboratories, to continue their irreplaceable research. In March 1931 an engineering student informed me in great excitement that Professor Ramzin had that very day resumed his famous course on thermodynamics. In a typically academic understatement his opening words were: 'As I was explaining at the close of my previous lecture . . .'.

IN the field of Soviet literature there were dramatic controversies and confrontations, which were rapidly becoming more political than literary. The heavy hand of RAPP (*Rossiiskaia Assotsiatsiia Proletarskikh Pisatelei*) was felt on all sides, and many threats were made, and sometimes carried out, to exclude both non-communist fellow-travellers (*poputchiki*) and communist deviationists 'from literature' and 'from life'. The head of RAPP, Averbakh, thought to be the brother-in-law of Yagoda, former small-town pharmacist and by now the real head of the OGPU in Menzhinskii's eclipse, was building for himself the reputation of 'the Stalin of literature'. This personal relationship, many felt, explained his vast powers, which could hardly be due to his less than commonplace intellectual and literary talent. Yet there were controversies, lively discussions at the Dom Gertsena, and participation by educated opinion in judging new plays and novels. In addition, the reading public, a remarkably cultivated one, had at hand a very wide range of translated literature. *Sister Carrie*, *The Forsyte Saga*, and *Desire Under the Elms* were debated as hotly as the latest work by Bezymenskii, Pilniak, or Sholokhov. Literary life was dangerous, but it was undeniably lively.

Only the Moscow theatre seemed relatively unconcerned in its both old and new vitality. New plays and new interpretations of older ones were awaited eagerly and discussed with vigour. The theatre was a bond among the intelligentsia, even more than the novel. At its worst it could never be insignificant.

The *Maly* and the Moscow Art Theatre were at the peak of their styles. The Vakhtangov and Meierhold theatres were doing exciting and controversial things. Tairov's *Kamerny* was flourishing despite political difficulties over its repertory and charges of 'formalism'. The Second Moscow Art Theatre, later disbanded, had a strong impact, though a less distinctive style. The crust of tradition in opera and ballet was being broken by the Musical Drama of Danchenko. In the difficult conditions of overwork, overcrowding, and undernourishment it seemed at times as if the intelligentsia was being given 'theatre and potatoes' instead of 'bread and circuses'. The rich repertories gave the many theatre-maniacs the widest sweep of stimulation, from the Art Theatre's unchanging version of *The Seagull* to Afinogenov's *Bread* and *Fear*, in

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which the painfully real conflicts of the first acts were regularly resolved at the end in the approved Kremlin-Pollyanna style.

In its own way intelligentsia opinion resisted the pressure of the new conformity as long as it could. It divided educated people, according to its own standard, into *intelligenty* and *inzheniery*. *Intelligenty* were people who had opinions of their own, who asserted some intellectual independence and personal sincerity. 'Engineers', regardless of their various professions, were those who mouthed the slogans of the regime and renounced all judgment of their own.

During my two years in Moscow I could sense almost physically how dangerous it was becoming for Russians to express any thoughts except those propagated by the *apparat* of the regime and its activists. More and more frequently, when any topic with political or ideological implications—and what topic was without them?—came up in a general conversation, and someone present would express the orthodox view according to *Pravda*, the others fell silent or turned the talk to some purely personal or housekeeping matter. Only literature, the theatre, and music still offered outlets for a genuine exchange of personal thoughts.

It was also becoming dangerous to have friends and even close acquaintances. When someone 'fell ill' (*zabolel*) of the OGPU disease, even his casual associates and colleagues might suffer extreme penalties of disgrace and exile. It was easier and safer, but not really safe even so, to withdraw within a small circle of trusted friends.

The atomising impact of the spreading wave of fear was reinforced by the impossibility of providing even the most modest *zakuski* in traditional Russian hospitality to guests. For Russians, accustomed to sharing gladly and generously whatever they had, it was painful to discover, more and more often, that they had barely the bodily energy to sustain the daily round. And that daily effort to keep body and soul together was rendered more and more difficult by interminable waiting in many *ocheredi* (queues) and by the cramming of great numbers of newcomers into old and dilapidated housing. The ebbing of the intelligentsia's vitality could be felt almost from month to month under the twin pressures of privation and terror.

As the older culture was drained from Soviet life, two other trends, of unequal power, were setting a new tone. One of these was the real and often touching utopianism of the first five-year plan; the other, the rapid crystallisation of the Stalinist system. Both trends, while very different in psychological content and durability, were essential to the impetus which the plan was giving to the transformation of Russia.

LOOKING back from the cynical superiority of knowing much about the Stalinist and post-Stalinist experiences of Soviet life, a present-day observer can easily overlook the genuine upsurge of messianic hopes and revolutionary self-sacrifice that lent a special aura to the launching of the first *piatiletka*. The force of this emotion was great among a part

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of the first post-revolutionary generation, especially among many sons and daughters of the previously underprivileged peasants and factory workers. To them the purpose of the revolution was to release their energies and to give them opportunities, not merely to advance their own careers, but to create a new society, never known before, in which injustice and inherited social inequities would dissolve in a brotherhood of the proletariat and eventually of all people. Such was the dream of many.

The concrete channels of this transformation of energies were many. To ambitious younger members of the new privileged classes, among them Nikita Khrushchev, the *Rabfak* (Workers' Faculties) opened a shortcut into and through higher education, shorn, it is true, of many of its traditional values. The counterpart to imposing strict quotas against the admission of children of non-worker and non-peasant families to higher education was the promotion of a wave of new energies from below. By the early 1920s the regime had understood that the only way to impose its values on the intelligentsia was to create its own 'Soviet' intelligentsia in its place, to form a new 'serving class' trained to meet the demands of the new system of power. In effect the party was saying to the intelligentsia, 'We need your knowledge and we intend to squeeze it out of you to your last breath, but we do not trust you and therefore we will, generally speaking, deny higher education to your children and force them to become ordinary workers'.

In a society in which the gap between *kultura* and *bezkultury* (absence of culture) was as marked as the older distinctions between rich and poor, powerful and weak (though far from coinciding!), some shock treatment of this kind was perhaps inevitable, not so much to humiliate the bearers of knowledge—although a great many communists envied and distrusted the non-party intelligentsia—as rather to stir the ambition and action of those who might otherwise have remained passive and neglected. Many beneficiaries of the new dispensation were crude in mind and self-seeking. Many others were willing to slave long and hard, and to bear gladly the burdens of social upheaval, for the sake of the bright image of a new and better society. For several millions of young Soviet citizens, the 'golden mountains' that were to be scaled by 1 October, 1933, the original terminal date of the first plan, were an almost tangible reality. To 'overtake and surpass' America by 1933 in production and living standards seemed to them a realistic goal, one for which a great many of them sacrificed health and happiness in an upsurge of puritanical self-denial.

Not all the *entuziasty* were young. For many who had joined the Bolshevik Party in the years of Civil War and had fought hard for its victory, the second revolution, that of 1929–33, with all the hardships and cruelties which they could foresee better than the next younger generation, also brought with it a renewal of the revolutionary spirit and a welcome release from the psychological doldrums of NEP, with its undramatic goals and its petty-bourgeois comfort. These were the men

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and women who provided the 'forty-thousanders', the agitators, organisers, and executioners who were assigned by the party to 'plant' (*nasazhdat*) the new collective farms or to force the tempo of industrial production and construction up to and beyond the limits of human endurance. Hardened in that most cruel form of conflict, civil war, communists of this stripe could carry out with a clear revolutionary conscience the gruesome task of uprooting millions of peasants, whether kulaks or not, in order to overthrow the system of individual peasant farming, which, as Lenin had said, was giving birth to capitalism day by day. In one collectivised village which I visited in 1930, three 'commissars' had been burned to death in the house of an exiled kulak. One of my students, a Civil War veteran, had lost a leg in the collectivisation campaign of early 1930.

One especially vivid recollection of 1930 is a marathon discussion of the pros and cons of collectivisation. At four o'clock one September afternoon I made my way onto a tiny river boat in Central Russia, with a small barge which it dragged behind. Until I was overcome by fatigue at four the next morning, I was witness to a continuous, vehement, and surprisingly even-tempered debate. Some of the passengers were peasants returning from the county seat. Three of them confided that they had gone there to appeal against being classified as kulaks. Others were textile workers on furlough from their mills for lack of cotton. A few were government officials, mostly older men and rather cautious in the midst of peasants. Still fewer were the young party members and activists, who had sharply arrogant answers to the many doubts and criticisms they heard expressed in the town meeting that was being held on deck.

'Why, if "they" want, as "they" say, to improve farming, are "they" driving away those peasants who are the best workers, who keep away from vodka, and who have built up their farms by their own hard work?' 'Instead of putting drunkards and ne'er-do-wells in as chairmen, why don't they appoint peasants who know how to make the land bear (*rozhat*)?' 'If everyone is going to be equal, then why don't they pay us muzhiks a salary, as they do to the workers?' 'How are we going to feed the country if "they" confiscate our seed grain to meet the *zagotovka* (compulsory collection) quota?' 'What will happen now that our cattle have been taken over by the kolkhoz? Who will get up at night to nurse the kolkhoz cow as he would his own?'

The few activists argued strongly for the advantages of tractors and harvesters and improved seed, but their listeners remained unconvinced. However, the peasants' final comment was, '"They" say we must be in the kolkhoz, so I guess there is nothing we can do about it'. The debate, conducted by uneducated but experienced peasants, was more penetrating than most of what one could read in the press. From this and similar encounters I took away a strong feeling of respect for the ability of Russian and Ukrainian peasants to observe closely and to reason clearly within the limits of their knowledge, as well as a sense

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of their pride in farming their own pieces of land, a pride that was being broken by the government's insistence on herding them into the new collectives.

While visiting a collective in the Ukraine, I happened to make a modest contribution to carrying out the *piatiletka*. A friendly young kolkhoznik of perhaps seventeen, after six weeks of training, had been placed in charge of several simple but effective brooders, together with a thousand or so of chicks. As we looked over his 'poultry sector' together, with a dozen eager lads of fourteen or fifteen tagging along, my young host complained of the high rate of mortality; indeed, many of the younger fledglings were particularly puny and listless. Having, in my boyhood, raised a hundred or more chickens each spring in our back yard on the edge of a small New England town, I could see that the older and stronger chickens were monopolising the feed and water. I pointed out to my host that by separating out his broods according to age groups (even one week's difference is important) he could assure each group of equal access to food and water. No sooner said than done! Within five minutes, under the instruction of the manager, the teen-age boys were busily arranging separate pens and feeding utensils for each group. I was less successful, however, in persuading him of the need to provide a soft mash for the chicks of up to one month.

The golden mountains of the first *piatiletka* were of all sizes and shapes. No part of life, it seemed, was too insignificant to escape being reconstructed at 'Bolshevik tempo'. 'There are no obstacles Bolsheviks cannot overcome!' The frequent and arbitrary exaction of unpaid overtime was almost universal, until the party had to issue a stern warning against the damage that was being caused by sheer physical exhaustion.

For office workers and students the *subbotnik* (special Saturday of donated labour) of the revolutionary years was reinstated on a wide scale. Clerks, teachers and students might be and were summoned at any time to unload firewood (the scarce coal was needed for power and transportation) or to manhandle sacks of potatoes. Frequently the teachers at the institute where I was teaching English part-time were hardly able to stay awake in class after a long freezing night of stevedoring. The students of the medical institute pledged themselves to complete their studies at *udarny* (shock-worker) tempo in four years instead of five. This 'revolutionary' initiative was promptly rescinded by a *Pravda* editorial, which pointed out the unfavourable consequence of sending out new doctors without training in cardiac, pulmonary, or cancerous diseases.

IN those years the 'meeting mania' also raged. Both production and study were liable to be disrupted at any time by prolonged assemblies, from which I as a foreigner, especially one who gave 'petty-bourgeois' (*meshchanin*) as his social origin on the innumerable *ankety*, was exempt.

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Whenever my students failed to show up, I knew they were being kept away by many hours of speeches against 'Left and Right deviationists', by sermons about the approaching collapse of capitalism, or simply by long-winded exhortations to work harder for the building of socialism. Factors of attendance or homework meant little in any case to my students, for the brigade system of study, with no individual examinations or marks, made it difficult to know who was learning what or how much.

In one of its more bizarre manifestations the *piatiletka* followed, or perhaps imitated, the French Revolution at its peak in abolishing the traditional calendar. The year was divided into twelve months of thirty days each, with five revolutionary holidays (six in leap-years) thrown in. The month consisted of six five-day weeks, and thus the seven-day week disappeared together with the names of the days. Within a fortnight of arriving in Russia I too had become disoriented and was able to keep track of the days only by their numbers. Nevertheless, through some quirk or oversight, *Izvestiia* went on printing the names of the days on its masthead.

In theory the purpose of this innovation was to lay the groundwork for a continuous work-week, in which one-fifth of all staffs would take their *vykhodnoi den* (day off) each day, while the factories, offices and stores would go on operating without interruption. Since this was not feasible for schools and institutes, they were given a ten-day week, with the tenth day serving as the free day for all. The continuous five-day week had a real logic behind it, for it was intended to take advantage of the abundance of hands and scarcity of machinery. In practice the new calendar was inconvenient and wasteful. If a document required, as it always did, multiple signatures, one of the essential signers was generally taking his *vykhodnoi den*; if the paper (*bumaga*) had to gather signatures in a fixed order of signing, the process of collecting them often became interminable. The skills of mechanics and foremen were even scarcer than those of the bureaucrats, and often machinery was left standing for lack of the skilled eye and hand. Or else the indispensable repairmen were obliged to forgo all free days, as well as working double shifts too often for their health.

Most Soviet citizens seemed to take a jaundiced view of the revolutionary calendar. It was designed, millions of peasants and ex-peasants felt, to wipe out the memory and practice of the numerous saints' days by which they were accustomed to regulate their work and diet. Near the Arbat I saw one hilarious sign posted on the door of a public bath: 'Closed on the former Sundays' (*zakryto po byvshim voskreseniiam*). It was generally assumed that the calendar had been introduced to prevent attendances at church services and also to undermine family life, which was being attacked on many sides as the last refuge of bourgeois corruption; it was rare for husband and wife to have the same *vykhodnoi den.* Eventually the practical inconveniences

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of the new calendar were recognised, various devices were invented to circumvent it, and it was repealed outright in 1933.

The utopian stream of revolutionary exaltation flowed side by side with a third and increasingly dominant force, that of emergent Stalinism. As the regime ground its way through the living, squirming, suffering mass towards its still distant goals of all-round industrialisation and collectivisation, it found it could not put its main reliance on the idealistic but inexperienced youth or even on the 'retreads' of the Civil War. Idealists might be at first bewildered and then revolted by the methods of persuasion that were needed. Even hardened revolutionaries might quail, and some did, before the sufferings of the intelligentsia and the despairing resistance of the villages. Dedicated Bolsheviks might rebel, and some did, against the extinction of party democracy and the growing use of pressure and terror against 'meritorious' (*zasluzhenye*) party members for their old or new sins against the 'general line', and in particular against the 'General Secretary', who had gathered the party's supposedly collective power into his own hands.

WHAT the regime needed, it was rapidly becoming clear, was a vast army of party and other functionaries who would carry out the leader's orders ruthlessly, without 'intelligentsia lily-handedness' (*intelligentskaia miagkotelost*). The *apparat* found and trained the people it needed and it rewarded them with emoluments that were easily discernible to every eye and with a delegated authority (*vlast*) that was subservient to its superiors and ruthless towards the people it ruled.

The emoluments, it is true, were modest in Western eyes, but to Russians they were substantial, especially in a time of general impoverishment: butter, when there was none for the general public; first priority in housing, often confiscated from victims of the spreading purge; first choice in clothing, shoes, vacations. Of great importance was the abolition of the 'party maximum' (*partiiny maksimum*).

Originally, following Lenin's dictum, the party had limited the earnings of all party and government officials to the average wage of a worker. In the 1920s, however, this ceiling had been stretched to make the higher party salaries equal to those of the best-paid workers. In 1930 the maximum stood at one hundred to one hundred and twenty-five rubles a month, compared with an average of about sixty rubles for workers and employees generally. In practice the maximum had become a fiction for many. A party member 'with know-how' (*s smekalkoi*) could easily supplement his maximum with fees, paid from trade-union funds, for lectures hastily put together from a *Pravda* article or from Stalin's latest speech. Even the fictitious maximum was becoming a handicap to the fulfilment of the *piatiletka*, for by 1930 a promising young engineer might have to take a substantial cut in salary if he joined the ranks of the party. In 1931, by an unpublished directive, the party

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maximum was finally eliminated in one further step away from the equalitarian utopia.

To many sincere communists the *piatiletka* seemed to promise a great leap forward, not only into 'American' affluence for everyone, but also into the stage of equalised earnings in factory and collective farm. Like many other visitors from abroad, in 1930 I was ushered around a well-run *kommuna* near Moscow, in which all property except personal clothing and balalaikas was held in common and all earnings were said to be equalised; food was prepared and eaten in common, and children were brought up in collective nurseries and kindergartens. In 1930 the boast was that this and similar show-case samples of equalitarian utopia, rather than the half-way house of the *artel* (later adopted as the standard for the kolkhoz) were to be the final and early goal of collectivisation. I also visited several factory shops in which some complete brigades, from foreman to apprentice, were sharing their pay equally.

It was not possible for me, an outsider, to learn at that time what various members of the factory brigade or the *kommuna* really thought about their incipient utopia, although one or two *brigadiry* (foremen) reacted to my questions with a very sour expression. But the scarcity of even simple foodstuffs and clothing, and the inevitable resort to the open market with its sky-rocketing prices, must have made the more experienced and efficient workers reluctant to share their insufficient earnings with others. In any case, by 1931 Stalin had recognised that piece-work, with sharp differentials, offered a stronger incentive to raising output than equalitarian sharing. In a major speech he attacked *uravnilovka* (levelling), demanded the close adjustment of rewards to performance, and denounced 'left-wing deviationists' for practising what he had previously praised. Thus the hierarchical principle, so deeply embedded in Russian tradition, was given a new place of honour, and the equally strong but diffuse longing for brotherhood and equality was relegated to the 'anti-party' dustbin.

As the Kremlin gradually faced up to the real dimensions of the goals it had set in the second and stepped-up version of the plan, it discovered it had no surplus of time or resources with which to temper its relentless goading. Everywhere the leader turned he saw the need for ever stricter organisation, discipline, obedience. In 1931–32 the Machine-Tractor Stations were introduced in order to establish over agriculture a firm control which the scattered and weak collective farms could not provide. The swelling numbers of exiles and forced labour, about which Moscow whispered horrified reports and rumours from late 1929 on, required a large police and engineering apparatus, for the OGPU was growing into the largest single enterprise of the new system, in charge of more than one-fifth of all construction. The political police grew rapidly in numbers; the party, state, planning, and industrial apparatus also.

'Objective conditions' were no longer accepted by the Kremlin as an explanation of failures to meet the targets that had been set from above.

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Bolshevik 'hardening' (*zakalka*) and 'purposiveness' (*tseleustremlennost*) were proclaimed the decisive factors. If failure to achieve was now denounced as due to a lack of Bolshevik willpower, not to remote and abstract planning or to widespread shortages of every kind, then any shortfall or breakdown could be attributed to secret political enmity, sabotage, and 'anti-party' activity. In this way Stalinism gradually elaborated its own Table of Ranks, with its gradations of modest rewards, and its corresponding code of political crimes, with its steep ladder of penalties.

By 1931 and 1932 the Stalinist system was rapidly achieving its classic structure. A general breakdown of food and other supplies in the last months of 1930 was followed early in 1931 by the opening of *zakrytye raspredeliteli* (closed shops, with admission by pass), and by the general introduction of ration cards, with their numerous categories (I was in category B, the highest except 'heavy workers'), and a system of special 'orders' granting the privilege of buying a suit, an overcoat, a pair of shoes or rubbers. The revolutionary equalitarianism of manners was not discarded; going unshaven and tie-less was a mark of proletarian sympathies even if not of proletarian origin. But the gulf was widening rapidly between those who gave orders and those who carried them out.

More than ever, ordinary people referred to their rulers as 'they' and 'them'. 'Little Stalins' were emerging on every hand, in every field of life, because the 'great Stalin' clearly could not achieve his goals without establishing clearcut lines of descending authority. Thus the third stream of Soviet life grew and spread out of the ambitions of the Soviet party-state. As it grew it displaced the milder customs of the uprooted intelligentsia and the emotionally equalitarian yearnings of the first-generation revolutionaries. By the end of the first *piatiletka* the path had been levelled for the all-round triumph of the Stalinist system.

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*The Organisation Man*

# THE LIFE AND WORK OF WILLI MÜNZENBERG

*Jorgen Schleimann*

WILLI MÜNZENBERG'S name does not figure in the post-war (16th) edition of *Der grosse Brockhaus*, Germany's authoritative encyclopedia. Yet Arthur Koestler wrote: 'If ever a biography of Willi Münzenberg will be written, it will be one of the most revealing documents about the period between the two wars'.

The 'Red Eminence' of the pre-war anti-fascist struggle was born on 14 August 1889, in the Thuringian town of Erfurt, the son of a local innkeeper. His father was a misfit, a restless character and something of a domestic tyrant. He was the illegitimate son of the Freiherr von Seckendorf and a peasant girl from Nebra in the Unstrut Valley (rumour had it that the Freiherr had so many illegitimate children that they might have formed a lane from Nebra to the next village).

Münzenberg's father had tried to make a military career, but in vain. Later he married a peasant's daughter from Freimar and settled in Thuringia, though settled is perhaps not the right word, since he changed his domicile and his profession frequently. When Willi was born, the father had become an innkeeper. He was frequently drunk, and would beat the boy in fury. Münzenberg's sister-in-law Margarete Buber-Neumann tells how one day, when beating the child, the father hit the paraffin lamp hanging from the ceiling and smashed it. 'You bloody fool! Now the lamp's ruined, too, because of you! Here, take this rope and go and hang yourself! You're no use anyway!' The fear of his father was so great that the boy actually went to the hayloft to carry out orders but fell asleep instead, with the rope in his hand.

Later, as a young man in Switzerland, Willi Münzenberg wrote a few plays and published two small volumes of poetry; one of these plays, a melodrama called *Jungvolk* (*Youth*), is an indignant protest against corporal punishment of children.

Willi's mother, a delicate and sickly woman, died when the boy was about six years old. At that time his two elder brothers, Hermann and Karl, had already left home, and Münzenberg was brought up by his sister Emmi.

The family was poor, and Münzenberg from an early age had to work hard in the paternal business, cleaning the premises, washing the glasses, serving the drinks, and playing cards with the customers, and in this way acquired a social consciousness beyond his age, listening to the talk of the workers and peasants and reading the newspapers aloud to them —another of his many duties.

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He went to the local village schools. 'The first years in Freimar, and the decisive years in a still worse school in the little village of Eberstadt by Gotha', he wrote. 'The village school had eight "classes", all taught in one room simultaneously by one teacher.' The last year he spent in a town school in Gotha but then it was too late to be of any great help. As far as education went, Münzenberg might claim to be a self-made man. Later on he became a passionate and even a discriminating reader, displaying the reading hunger common to many young people who have been deprived of proper educational facilities, but he also at an early age decided to subordinate literature to politics.

In Switzerland around 1910 he and his friends in the socialist youth movement took to literary studies. They read first the great Russians, Gogol, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Herzen, Tolstoy, and Gorky. Ibsen made a deep impression on them. His 'Nora' became their ideal woman, but Strindberg soon ended the Ibsen and Nora cult and became the real obsession.

The young people 'became sceptics, made bad jokes and thought the whole world shallow and empty. Some thought of committing suicide, since they found life pointless'. But Münzenberg soon discarded this literary nihilism and in retrospect calls this entire period 'a relapse'. 'If I overcame this crisis rapidly', he says, 'then it was—besides a permanent inner dissatisfaction with the eternal criticising and running down everything—because of an unconquerable need for practical constructive work. In quest of something positive to do I dropped Strindberg and seized on the works of Engels, Marx, Mehring. Above all I read Lassalle. This reading made it easier for me to find my way back to active work in the socialist youth and workers movement.'

Throughout his life two things kept Münzenberg from reading as much as he wanted to: his craving for activity and enormous capacity for work, and his ignorance of any foreign language. The restless activity was an almost physical need. When Münzenberg went to prison for the first time—on 19 November 1917, following his participation in the demonstration in Zürich two days earlier, which had ended in bloodshed—he describes his state of mind characteristically: 'In the first days I was as though stunned by the emptiness. I was used to receiving dozens of letters every day, to being in touch with the youth organisations of the entire world, to writing, agitating, organising . . . In one stroke it was all over. Thousands of links were suddenly broken. So many thoughts went through my head as to how the situation could be exploited, what could be done, organised, worked out, but there was no possibility of carrying out even a single one of these ideas. This was what tormented and hurt above all. This I felt to be the worst hardship of my time in custody.'

TO return to his Erfurt childhood, to the time when young Willi, under the impression of his reading, decided to go and help the Boers in their war with the British. Once he had made up his mind

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the eleven-year-old boy set out in the direction of Eisenach, full of good will and well supplied with bread, and got well past Gotha before he was caught and brought back. Strangely enough his father does not seem to have been very angry on this occasion.

At the age of thirteen Willi became an orphan; his father shot himself cleaning his gun while drunk.

Willi received his first vocational training as a barber, apprenticed to a hairdresser in Gotha. His most lively memory of that interlude was of the horrors which took place every Friday at the local home for the aged, when the poor old men were delivered up to the inexperienced hands of the apprentices. The apprentices started work at seven o'clock in the morning and worked until eight or nine in the evening, Saturdays even later, and on Sundays from seven to one o'clock. For the rest of his life Münzenberg was very careful in the choice of his hairdresser, and for some reason or other he never shaved himself.

After the barber's shop young Münzenberg entered the Lingel shoe factory in Erfurt. In the autumn of 1904, five years later, he had already become so involved in politics that he was fired for political agitation and for collecting money for the workers on strike in Sweden.

Attempts to find another job failed. All doors were closed; so, like many other young men at that time, Münzenberg went '*auf die Walze*'. The tour lasted a couple of months and came to a tragi-comic end in Pirmasens, where early one morning a companion took off in Münzenberg's shoes and trousers. Willi decided to work his way back to Erfurt; arriving there some weeks later, he took a job in the Hesse shoe factory.

The next spring Münzenberg went '*auf die Walze*' again and arrived in Zürich early in July 1910. After a short stay he started off again, intending to go to France, but in Berne he was offered the job of '*Zapfbursche*' at the Hotel Stern, and accepted it. Hardly had he informed friends in Zürich of his new address before he was called back to take up a better position in a Zürich chemist's shop.

When Willi Münzenberg entered the service of the Josef-Apotheke in Zürich in the summer of 1910, he was twenty years old. He left it three and a half years later to take up the newly-created post of secretary of the Swiss Socialist Youth Movement; from 1 January 1914 he became a professional politician, a professional revolutionary, though not exactly in the sense of the word given it by Lenin.

MÜNZENBERG had already had a fair amount of experience in the socialist movement; in 1906 he joined the *Bildungsverein Propaganda* in Erfurt. Although its youngest member, he had by the autumn of 1907 become its chairman; the Bildungsverein had in the meantime changed its name to *Freie Jugend* (Free Youth) and almost doubled its membership.

Münzenberg described his feelings at this sudden change in his life: 'The office of chairman woke in me a hitherto unknown feeling, that of

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responsibility. It was not lofty moral sentiments which prevented me from frequenting *Tanzkränzchen* like so many of my friends, from getting drunk on bad beer, from quarrelling, and from going with girls in the parks, since I saw in this nothing bad or degrading. What kept me from doing so was the thought: " You must not. You are chairman of the Association and responsible for it. How can you meet your adversary, the police, if you join in such foolishness?" '

These years revealed his abilities as a political organiser and agitator; the will to influence, to lead and guide other people had been born. They saw, too, the beginning of his disillusionment with the German Social-Democratic Party. His active and militant spirit found no echo in the party bureaucracy, and was chilled by the lack of revolutionary fervour.

Münzenberg particularly resented the decision of the trade union congress in Hamburg in 1907 to dissolve the existing youth organisations. Among the few who spoke against that decision was Karl Liebknecht, the political leader who made the strongest impact on Münzenberg until he met Lenin in Switzerland.

In November 1912 Münzenberg attended the congress of the Socialist International in Basle, where Jean Jaurès, August Bebel, Vaillant, and Klara Zetkin spoke. The congress adopted the historic resolution obliging all socialist parties to do everything in their power to prevent the outbreak of war. Two years later the war was a fact, and the promises and engagements of the Basle congress were submerged under waves of chauvinism.

The militant pacifist Münzenberg remained in Switzerland; the time was ripe for his political ideas, and Switzerland the right place to expose them. He had made a flying start there. ' One Friday in August 1910 I arrived in Zürich ', Münzenberg writes, ' On Saturday I looked up the socialist youth organisation in Zürich, the *Jungburschenverein*, and became a member.' Two years later, when the secretary of the Zürich *Arbeiterunion* was forced to leave the Canton after the general strike in the summer of 1912, Münzenberg took over the editorship of the monthly *Die Freie Jugend*, and became a member of the executive committee of the Swiss Socialist Youth Movement.

In the autumn of 1915 *Freie Jugend* was supplemented by the quarterly *Jugend-Internationale*, which carried contributions from, *inter alios*, Karl Liebknecht, Eduard Bernstein, Henriette Roland-Holst, Karl Radek, and the group of Russian emigrés in Switzerland which included Lenin, Zinoviev, Alexandra Kollontay, and Angelica Balabanov. It had reached a circulation of 40,000 copies when both publications were banned by the Swiss government on 1 March 1918.

At the 1916 congress of the Swiss Social-Democratic Party Münzenberg became a member of the *Parteivorstand* (executive). Not without pride he notes in his autobiography: ' It was the first and probably also the only time that a foreigner, and what is more such a notorious " leftist "

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and anti-militarist as I, belonged to the top leadership of the Swiss social-democracy.'

In April 1915 he called an international youth conference in Berne. Fourteen delegates from Poland, Holland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Germany, and Russia took part. The main outcome of the conference was the decision to create an international youth secretariat in Zürich and to entrust Münzenberg with its management. The Berne conference meant outmanoeuvring the Vienna Youth Bureau of the Socialist International and its secretary, the Austrian Danneberg. It was Münzenberg's first victory at the international level; to raise the banner of pacifism and internationalism in the midst of war was not a minor exploit; it prepared the ground for what four years later was to become the Communist Youth International.

In August 1917 he went to Sweden to attend the second bureau meeting of the Berne conference. It has been said that this journey to and from the Swedish capital took place in sealed wagons through war-time Germany, but according to Babette Gross, Münzenberg's widow, this is wrong. Münzenberg went alone by ordinary train to and from Stockholm; but since he was a German citizen, and liable to conscription, the German army authorities had to give their consent to his crossing German territory, which, surprisingly, they did.

Shortly after returning to Zürich Münzenberg was arrested and spent five months in custody. He was released on bail in March 1918, and immediately resumed work, editing the eleventh and last issue of the *Jugend-Internationale*. It appeared on 1 May under the title *Brot, Friede, Freiheit* (Bread, Peace, Freedom) and the periodical was prohibited.

At this time he wrote the first booklet on the victory of the bolsheviks in Russia to appear in German, *Der Kampf und Sieg der Bolschewiki*. Material for it was supplied by Holzman, the first envoy of the Soviet Republic to reach Switzerland. The first edition appeared under the pseudonym of one of Münzenberg's friends, E. Arnold, but later editions in Stuttgart and Essen were published under his own name.

In May Münzenberg was again arrested and imprisoned, first in Witzwil, later in Meilen, where he finished his book *Die sozialistischen Jugendorganisationen vor und während des Krieges* (Berlin, 1919), and where he stayed till—accompanied by police and army officers, and by his friend Fritz Platten—he was taken to Schaffhausen. At eleven o'clock in the evening of 11 November 1918, he was taken to the Swiss-German frontier and ordered to cross the border. Arrived at the other side, Münzenberg was arrested anew .

ON 20 October 1920, a year after its foundation, the Communist Youth International launched an appeal for the victims of the white terror in Hungary. Famous intellectuals like the French novelist Romain Rolland, his American colleague Upton Sinclair, and the Belgian painter Masereel gave their support. These and other intellectuals were to repeat their signatures on Münzenberg appeals dozens of times in the

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years to come. The outcome of the Hungarian appeal was quite satisfactory but Münzenberg adds the characteristic comment: 'Bigger than the material was the political success of the action.'

It was no doubt in such dealings that Münzenberg realised the unfitness of intellectuals in politics, or rather the limitations of their usefulness. He, the activist and organiser, had no time or taste for literary or philosophical sophistication. Ideas were levers for social action, not material for debate and individual spiritual enrichment. In dealing with intellectuals—all friendship and personal feelings apart—he thought and behaved in terms of public utility. Tactical political considerations overruled the quest for truth and undermined the foundations of intellectual honesty. Several of his collaborators have borne witness to this, among them some who were most fond of Münzenberg as a human being.

Koestler, for instance, tells how Münzenberg kept pressing for the inclusion of horror-photographs in the book which he, Koestler, was writing on the Spanish Civil War. Among them were some from doubtful or unidentified sources. Koestler objected but Münzenberg persisted. 'My misgivings about these were brushed aside with the argument that as we both knew the allegation to be true, the details did not matter and had sometimes to be "interpolated"—I remember this conversation vividly, for Willi otherwise never used such scientific expressions.'

Gustav Regler, the German novelist who became one of the heroes of the Spanish Civil War, says about Münzenberg's anti-fascist propaganda: 'He believed that one had to outdo a cynical liar in cynicism. His books were written rapidly. Where material was lacking, he used his knowledge of the adversary.' Regler should know. He was one of the authors of the most famous of all Münzenberg publications, the *Brown Book*. Margarete Buber-Neumann wrote: 'He understood how important the support of the intellectuals could be but he had little respect for their work.'

On his release Münzenberg went to Stuttgart and started reorganising the socialist youth movement in Wurttemberg. One of his first activities was, characteristically enough, to renew contacts with youth organisations abroad, and an international youth conference was held in Berlin on 7 December 1918. It approved the transfer of the Youth Secretariat from Zürich to Stuttgart.

Münzenberg also attended the congress of German Workers' and Soldiers' Councils in Berlin, where he renewed his acquaintance with Karl Liebknecht and met Rosa Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches. In Stuttgart he worked closely with the Spartakus group within the USP (Independent Social-Democratic Party) led by Klara Zetkin. On 9 January 1919 he took part in a street demonstration which ended in a clash with the army units supporting the local SPD government. Two days later Münzenberg was arrested and imprisoned in the fortress of Ulm, where he was to spend the next two months. It was here that he

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learned of the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. After a further three months in prison in Rothenburg, Münzenburg and his fellow prisoners were brought into court, tried, and acquitted of the charge of treason and insurrection.

While in prison in Rothenburg, Münzenberg prepared the third edition of his booklet *Der Kampf und Sieg der Bolschewiki*, wrote a pamphlet for the German communist party *Nieder mit Spartakus*, which was distributed in thousands of copies all over the country, and also wrote a more theoretical booklet entitled *Von der Revolte zur Revolution* (Berlin, 1919).

THE left-wing international socialist youth association founded in Berne in 1915 had maintained an intermittent existence, and at a conference in Berlin that opened on 20 November 1919 it transformed itself into the founding congress of the Communist Youth International (YCI). The Youth International affirmed that it 'stands on the basis of the decisions of the First Congress of the Third International and forms part of that International', but Münzenberg admits that the affiliation of the youth organisations to the communist parties at that time was a loose one. This may well have been to his liking, since he had for years vigorously defended the organisational independence of youth movements vis-à-vis the established political parties.

The new organisation installed its secretariat in Berlin with Willi Münzenberg at its head. The next couple of years were busier than ever. Münzenberg threw all his energy into the task of building the YCI into a mass organisation.

In the summer of 1920 Münzenburg went on his first trip to Russia, to attend the second congress of the Comintern as a delegate of the Youth International. He had been invited by Lenin to the founding congress of Comintern but being in prison had been unable to attend.

It was a great disappointment to Münzenberg that the affairs of the Youth International did not come up for debate at the congress. In a pamphlet on this question he wrote: 'It is certain that a serious and detailed discussion in plenary session of the problems of the proletarian youth movement would have called the attention of not only the delegates but also of all revolutionary organisations to the great importance of the communist youth movement for the proletarian world revolution, and would have done so to a much greater extent than will be the case if questions are decided in a small commission and in the ever-narrowing circle of the executive committee'.

The second congress of the YCI opened surreptitiously in Jena in April 1921, but was almost immediately transferred to Berlin, the Jena police having learned of the congress through the arrest of some of the Polish delegates. Since some of the foreign delegations, including the Russian, were unable to reach Berlin, it was decided to suspend the congress, and to resume its work in conjunction with the third congress of Comintern in Moscow later in the year. It opened in Moscow on

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14 July 1921. The debates were animated, and dealt mainly with the role of the youth movement in the revolution, the immediate tasks of the International, its methods of agitation, and the seat of its executive. Münzenberg says that Lenin himself had to intervene to get unified decisions and the unanimous election of a new executive (which included Münzenberg).

This version needs supplementing from other sources, since the outcome of the congress was Münzenberg's replacement by Lazar Shatskin, the Komsomol secretary, as head of the YCI executive and the transfer of its headquarters from Berlin to Moscow.

Carew Hunt asserts—in one of the very few articles about Münzenberg by recent writers—that the Executive Committee of Comintern (ECCI) had 'issued peremptory instructions that the Jena discussions were to be regarded as "not binding", and the congress be transferred to Moscow', i.e. a direct intervention by the Comintern secretariat in the internal affairs of the YCI. It may well be so but unfortunately Carew Hunt does not give the evidence. He quotes Ruth Fischer to the effect that 'Münzenberg, already a Reichstag deputy and a coming man, was naturally wanted for more important work' than that of the YCI.

Babette Gross maintains that Münzenberg was removed as secretary of the YCI by the Comintern secretary Zinoviev, because he was too independent, and considered he knew more about how to set to work in Western countries than the Russians. Münzenberg was convinced that the fate of the world revolution would be decided in Western Europe, or more precisely in Germany. In a speech at Dresden on 31 July 1919, he said: 'The heart of the world revolution is Germany. If the heart beats for communism, the whole world will do so.' A few months later he reaffirmed these views in his programme speech to the founding congress of the Communist Youth International: 'The revolution can be victorious only internationally; only internationally can socialism be realised.'

ALTHOUGH Münzenberg was still a member of the YCI executive and also of the ECCI, where he and the Hungarian Lekai had replaced Shatskin as YCI representatives, he had received no specific assignment and was in fact sitting idle in Moscow when something happened which was to change the direction of his life and political career. This is how Münzenberg himself describes the event: 'A few days after the congress Lenin sent for me and told me of the famine which was threatening and had already broken out in the Volga and the Ukraine . . . millions of peasants and their families were menaced by famine. Lenin explained how little hope there was of getting any serious help from the capitalist states. Besides Russia's own relief work, particularly by the Red Army, which was already being prepared on a mass scale, help was to be expected only from the international proletariat. His plan was to propose to the ECCI to start immediately

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an extensive international relief action and to charge me with its organisation.'

Lenin's forebodings about the attitude of the non-communist world were not confirmed. 'On 26 June *Pravda* admitted that twenty-five million people were starving. On 13 July Maxim Gorky launched a world-wide appeal for help, and on 2 August Chicherin sent a circular note to the governments of Europe and the United States informing them of the extent of the disaster and urging them not to interfere with any attempts made to mitigate it. Assistance was promptly forthcoming. Vast quantities of food and clothing were poured into Russia partly by the American Relief Association under Hoover's chairmanship, and partly by the Council for Russian Relief under Nansen, which had been set up in Geneva on 15 August by a committee sponsored by the Red Cross . . . None the less, it was felt desirable to reinforce these activities by others of a more specifically proletarian nature.'

This was the origin of the *Internationale Arbeiterhilfe* (IAH) set up by Münzenburg in Berlin, where he organised the foreign committee of the Comintern commission charged with the execution of the relief action.

In the summer of 1921 Münzenberg and Koenen of the KPD negotiated with representatives of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) and the bureaux of the Second International and the Vienna Union of Socialist Parties (the two-and-a-half International). They proposed a joint relief committee with equal representation for Comintern, Profintern, IFTU, the Second International, and the Vienna Union, but the proposal was turned down in Amsterdam, London, and Vienna. Similar attempts to set up joint committees with non-communists were made on the local level by the national communist parties.

After the failure of these attempts, Münzenberg went about his job in a characteristic way; in his own words, 'the foreign committee tried to organise its work on the broadest possible basis by attracting a number of prominent personalities, artists, scientists, and so on.' He succeeded in winning the active support of, *inter alia*, Käthe Kollwitz, Einstein, Maximilian Harden, Bernard Shaw, Edgar Whitehead, Anatole France, and Henri Barbusse, to name some of the more prominent non-communists. National committees were organised in many countries, and an international conference of these committees was held in Berlin on 14 September 1921. On 17 August the first issue of the *Bulletin* of the new organisation had appeared.

Whatever the IAH was originally intended to be, it blossomed eventually into the 'Münzenberg Concern', a vast complex of famine relief committees and aid organisations, committees of solidarity with strikers, imprisoned socialists, and oppressed colonial peoples, of mobile canteens, children's homes, and holiday settlements, of publishing houses, newspapers, magazines, film companies and film distribution societies, vocational associations, friendship societies, organisations against fascism

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and imperialism, organisations far transcending the boundaries of Germany and even of Europe.

Münzenberg had found his true vocation of entrepreneur. This was empire-building in the field of public opinion. Materially disinterested, Willi Münzenberg created his trust in the interests of the world revolution, and in the service of the Comintern.

In the ten-year report on the activities of the IAH, Münzenberg drew up the official balance sheet: 'In all, 100 aid ships and shipments were organised by the IAH, and 40,000 tons of food, clothes, shoes, machines, tools, medicine, etc., were brought to Russia . . . In the critical months of February, March, April, May, June, and July 1922 the IAH distributed daily up to 100,000 free food rations, in all 17,204,890 rations . . . The most extensive work in the field of children's relief was done by the IAH in the period from the spring of 1922 to the autumn of 1923. 103 children's homes with 11,579 children were completely fed, boarded, clothed, and provided with school materials'.

With the end of the critical stage of the famine, the IAH was transformed. About a year after the start, Münzenberg received new instructions from Lenin. In a letter dated 2 December 1922 he wrote: 'Now the task is to heal the wounds made by the famine, above all to take care of the thousands of orphan children and to reconstruct the seriously damaged agriculture and industry in the famine areas . . . In addition to continuing strong pressure on the governments of the bourgeois countries to recognise the Soviet government, a broad economic aid action by the world proletariat is to-day the best and most practical support for the Soviet Union in its hard economic battle against the imperialist concerns and the best support for the socialist reconstruction of its economy'.

The capacity of the IAH to provide help for the reconstruction of the Soviet economy was never really put to the test. While making its preparations the IAH received an emergency appeal from the Japanese trade unions to undertake action for the relief of the victims of the 1923 earthquake. This was followed by a campaign in 1923–24 for the German workers involved in the series of large-scale strikes in those years and by a campaign in support of the English miners in 1926, following the general strike. The year before the IAH had undertaken a vast campaign in support of 'the distressed and striking masses of China'. All these and similar actions were launched at IAH congresses in Berlin, which kept Münzenberg in touch with numerous personalities and leading intellectuals all over the world.

Münzenberg claims that the IAH in the first ten years of its existence collected 120 million marks for its relief work, publishing houses, and film companies. Apart from this, he must have affected the attitude of millions of people towards the Soviet Union and the cause of communism, which was indeed precisely what he had set out to do.

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MÜNZENBERG was a Reichstag deputy from 1924 till Hitler outlawed the Communist Party after the burning of the Reichstag in 1933. He was elected to the central committee of the German CP for the first time in 1924, but his relative independence meant that he could keep clear of the disputes and factional fighting which bedevilled the German party in the 1920s.

The main Münzenberg enterprises were the publishing house *Neuer deutscher Verlag*, directed by Münzenberg's wife, Babette Gross; the book series *Universum Bücherei*; the two Berlin daily newspapers, *Berlin am Morgen* and *Welt am Abend*; the magazines *Der Rote Aufbau* and the popular monthly *AIZ* (*Arbeiter-Illustrierte-Zeitung*).

One gets an impression of the size and influence of some of these publications by following the growth of the *AIZ*. Its first issue appeared on 1 November 1921, under the title *Sowjetrussland im Bild*, in 10,000 copies. Three years later 325,000 copies were distributed (it had changed its name to *Sichel und Hammer*) in Germany alone, and in 1931 the circulation of the German-language edition had reached 420,000 and the publication had become a weekly.

The IAH also ran *Mezhrabpom-Film* in Moscow, which produced some of the most famous Soviet films, like Pudovkin's *Storm over Asia* and von Eck's *Road to Life*. The company had three cinemas of its own, *Koloss* and *Temp* in Moscow and *Gigant* in Leningrad. *Koloss* was then the biggest cinema in the Russian capital.

As if this was not enough, Münzenberg, acting as always on Comintern instructions, founded and ran two additional international organisations, both of which were to challenge the conscience of the world; the League against Imperialism and the Anti-Fascist World Congress. Officially, both were totally independent of the IAH but in fact they were both organised and financed by it.

The League against Imperialism was set up at an international congress held in Brussels in February 1927, attended by 174 delegates from 21 countries. The preparatory work had been done by Münzenberg's close collaborator, the Hungarian-born communist Gibarti. Professor Albert Einstein became honorary president of the League together with Henri Barbusse (they held the same position in the IAH), and Madame Sun Yat-sen. George Lansbury (vice-chairman of the British Labour Party) became chairman of the League and Edo Fimmen (secretary of the International Federation of Transport Workers) vice-chairman. The executive committee included Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohammed Hatta. It was a typical Münzenberg set-up.

When the Nazis came to power in 1933 the League's headquarters were moved to Paris, as were most of Münzenberg's organisations. After the seventh Comintern congress in 1935 the League faded out, in deference to the popular front policy. But similar organisations with other names were set up in a number of countries, such as the Colonial Information Bureau, started in Britain in 1937.

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The anti-fascist world congress was held in Berlin in March 1929. Three years later, in August 1932, a larger congress was held in Amsterdam to expose anew the menace of fascism. A further meeting was held in the Salle Pleyel in Paris; the Amsterdam-Pleyel movement, officially known as the World Committee against War and Fascism, was presided over by the French pacifist writer Henri Barbusse, but behind the scenes moved the indefatigable figure of Willi Münzenberg, busier than ever.

Münzenberg's preoccupation with war and fascism was nothing new; from his youth he had been a militant pacifist, and the growth of Nazism in Germany had determined his political action for years. Having rid himself of his illusions of a quick revolutionary victory in Germany, he no longer shared the dogmatic optimism of the communist leaders. Indeed, some of his difficulties with the Comintern secretariat in the first years of emigration arose from his refusal to accept the official party thesis according to which the German communists had not been defeated in 1933, but had undertaken a temporary retreat.

In the night of 27–28 February 1933 the Reichstag burned. Münzenber happened to be in his constituency in Frankfurt when the news came through; that same night his apartment in Berlin was searched and wrecked, and Münzenberg and a companion drove to the French frontier. They crossed it at dawn without passports, and after a short wait were granted asylum in France. Unlike many of his compatriots and comrades, not to mention the rest of the world, Münzenberg knew what was coming.

MÜNZENBERG now turned his energies to establishing a united anti-Nazi front among the German emigrés. The Swedish banker Olof Aschberg, at that time living in France, writes: 'He had informed the French government of his plans and had strong support from the head of the press section in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pierre Comert, with whom he was acquainted from the time when Comert had been press attaché at the French embassy in Berlin. Münzenberg wanted me to help him finance his propaganda against Nazism. Thus the publishing house *Editions du Carrefour* started.'

Some of the Berlin funds had been saved, and besides that and whatever help he received from Aschberg, Münzenberg was still working for the Comintern, which now officially charged him with organising propaganda against the Nazis.

Some of the Berlin staff had also escaped arrest, and Münzenberg reorganised his forces in Paris. There was his wife, Babette Gross, his secretary, Hans Schulz, Otto Katz, who had been manager of *Mezhrabpom-Film*, Gibarti, secretary of the League against Imperialism, and others. And then, of course, there were the intellectuals, the German writers and artists in emigration, most of them living in Paris but some also in Moscow or Prague or elsewhere: they included Johannes Becher,

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Willi Bredel, Lion Feuchtwanger, Alfred Kantorowicz, Egon Erwin Kisch, Arthur Koestler, Heinrich Mann, Gustav Regler, Ludwig Renn, Anna Seghers, Manes Sperber, and Bodo Uhse. Münzenberg put them all to work.

As a propagandist he reached out for the mass audience. He was not interested in intellectual refinement or polemical finesse. His books were to be like physical assaults on the enemy. The first and most famous was the *Brown Book of the Hitler Terror*, published in 1934 by *Editions du Carrefour*. It revealed the existence of a secret underground passage between the Reichstag and the offices of the Reichstag president Hermann Göring. In the eyes of the public this established the guilt of the Nazis. Göring was the incendiary. Whether this was actually true or not was of little concern to Münzenberg, who had set up a 'Committee of Inquiry into the Origins of the Reichstag Fire Trial'. The committee was composed of famous lawyers, and its hearings in London in September 1933 became, as it were, a counter-trial. 'A public shadow-trial of this kind was a novelty for the West and gained world-wide publicity,' Koestler writes. 'Münzenberg had hit on the idea when, in search of a new propaganda stunt, he had remembered the "secret courts" of Russian revolutionaries in Tsarist days.'

The counter-trial verdict—announced on 20 September 1933, on the eve of the opening of the real *Reichstagsbrand-Prozess* before the German Supreme Court in Leipzig—was an acquittal of the accused communists. The outcome of the Leipzig trial, too, was the acquittal of Dimitrov, Popov, Tanev, and Ernst Torgler. Van der Lubbe, who confessed to incendiarism, and who was defamed and slandered in the *Brown Book*, was condemned to death and executed.

The first *Brown Book* was followed by a second one in 1934, *The Reichstag Fire Trial*; *The Second Brown Book of the Hitler Terror*; it had an introductory chapter by Dimitrov and a foreword by D. N. Pritt, K.C. Similar volumes dealt with the Nazi network of spies abroad, the liquidation of the S.A. leader, Ernst Röhm, Gregor Strasser and other oppositional elements on 30 June 1934; the persecution of 600,000 German Jews; German military preparations, and other themes. In the period 1933–37 the *Editions du Carrefour* published thirty-four books and five booklets.

Münzenberg's *Propaganda als Waffe*, published in 1937, deserves special mention. Besides the autobiographical *Die dritte Front*, it is his main literary work, a brilliant analysis of Nazi propaganda methods and revelatory about Münzenberg's own conceptions of propaganda. He came to the conclusion that Hitler's propaganda was overdone: 'The total quality of the propaganda may seduce the man in the street, but precisely this quality also annuls part of the effect, for the man who is already dissatisfied with some small thing is forced to be dissatisfied with the entire system. . . . This propaganda is so extensive that it cannot avoid turning in the end against its own originators. The Hitler

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propagandists speak too much, write too much, promise too much, and lie too much.'

But Münzenberg, the professional propagandist, also knew that propaganda has to be actively refuted: 'Hitler propaganda only gained ground where it was unopposed by an equally strongly directed counter-propaganda; against strong opposition it made no headway'. Counter-propaganda was, of course, no longer possible inside Germany. Münzenberg ends his book on propaganda as a weapon by exclaiming: 'On the battlefield of propaganda the motto of the anti-Hitler fight has a particular and topical significance: attack, attack, and attack again'. The very title Münzenberg selected for his book embodied this motto. In fact it was originally the title of a book published by a German army officer.

THE World Committee for the Relief of the Victims of German Fascism was the parent organisation of a new Münzenberg concern in emigration. In addition to the Amsterdam-Pleyel organisation, a parallel body was set up in Paris in 1935, the *Rassemblement Universel pour la Paix*, which held a world congress in Brussels the following year to discuss the consequences of the *de facto* collapse of the League of Nations after Mussolini's attack on Ethiopia. The RUP congress opened on 3 September 1936 with a speech by the Belgian socialist leader Emil van der Velde. Lord Robert Cecil and Pierre Cot were elected chairmen of the congress, and among the participants were some of the prominent people who had participated in the founding congress of the League against Imperialism. According to Olof Aschberg there were 5,000 delegates from thirty-five countries.

The Rassemblement was administered on behalf of Willi Münzenberg by Louis Dolivet, a protégé of Pierre Cot. Headquarters were in the Rue de Bourgogne, near the Assemblée Nationale; Olof Aschberg put his *hotel particulier* in Rue Casimir-Périer at the disposal of the organisation to house an international club, the *Cercle des Nations*, which quickly became a favourite meeting place of the left-wing Paris intelligentsia. Lord Cecil and Pierre Cot became its honorary presidents, and the chairman was the Nobel Prize winner, Professor Jean Perrin. 'Famous men and women met at the club,' writes Aschberg, 'regardless of colour, religion, and political party. Politicians came there, painters, musicians, scientists, writers, journalists, industrialists, bankers, and businessmen from all corners of the earth. The club could serve dinner for 300 and banquets with 500 participants often took place.' Nehru was one of the many famous men who spoke there.

In addition a 'Freedom Library' was set up on the Boulevard Arago, where Münzenberg collected copies of the books burned and banned by Goebbels. Here were also housed the headquarters of the French branch of the IAH, the *Secours Ouvrier International*. The *AIZ* now appeared in Prague and Paris along with a new weekly, *Die Gegengriff*; there was also a brief-lived magazine entitled *Unsere Zeit*.

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In July 1934 Münzenberg went on a lecture trip to the United States, accompanied by Babette Gross, Kurt Rosenfeld, and Aneurin Bevan. Gibarti had organised the fund-raising campaign. Münzenberg spoke in New York, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Boston, and Washington, at meetings organised mostly by the local German clubs, by socialists or trade unions. The meeting in Madison Square Garden turned into a mass demonstration. The German Embassy in Washington protested but Münzenberg stayed the full four weeks permitted by his special visa. At the end of the year he and Babette Gross went to Spain on a private visit to Alvarez del Vayo, later the Foreign Minister of the Spanish Republic. In the spring of 1936—in April or May—they went to Moscow to discuss the preparations for an international peace conference to be held in Amsterdam in the summer. The German Popular Front was discussed at Comintern headquarters, where it was suggested that Münzenberg should work for a period in the Agit-Prop section of the ECCI. Münzenberg gave a non-committal answer.

Back in Paris he started on a new series of activities. On 16 July the Civil War had erupted in Spain. Münzenberg immediately organised a Committee for War Relief for Republican Spain, and later a Committee of Inquiry into Alleged Breaches of the Non-Intervention Agreement. Members of the Spanish Relief Committee included the Conservative Duchess of Atholl, the Liberal Sir Walter Layton, and the Communist Professor J. B. S. Haldane, and the Inquiry Committee included Philip Noel-Baker, Lord Faringdon, and Eleanor Rathbone, but the secretariat remained in the hands of the communist party. A Spanish Milk Fund was organised as an offshoot of the Relief Committee.

During the initial period of the Spanish Civil War Münzenberg took care of volunteers on their way to join the Republican army and helped to arrange the supply of weapons to Spain. A Spanish news agency, *Agence Espagne*, was set up in Paris in cooperation with the Spanish Foreign Minister Alvarez del Vayo. Münzenberg's second-in-command at the time, Otto Katz, was put in charge of the Relief Committee and the news agency and became, according to Koestler, the 'dispenser of the Loyalist Government's secret propaganda funds for French newspapers and politicians'. Later a branch office of the agency was opened in London, directed by Geoffrey Bing. Koestler was twice sent to Spain to collect material for Münzenberg's propaganda activities. On the second occasion he was caught by Franco troops in Malaga, sentenced to death, and released only after British intervention following a vigorous press campaign run mainly by Otto Katz using the channels of the various Münzenberg organisations. Between his two trips Koestler had written a book on the Spanish Civil War which appeared in the *Editions du Carrefour* in German and French editions. Otto Katz also wrote a book on Spain, which appeared under the pseudonym of Spielhagen in a German edition entitled *Spione und Verschwörer in Spanien*, and anonymously in London, 1937, under the title *The Nazi Conspiracy in Spain—by the Editor of the Brown Book of the Hitler Terror.*

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IT has been said that the years in Paris were one of the happiest periods in the life of Willi Münzenberg, and this is probably true. He benefited from the Popular Front tactics, first tried out in France and later officially adopted by the seventh Comintern congress of July-August 1935. In fact, Münzenberg had himself contributed considerably to the success of the French experiment, and it was he who, at a meeting in the Hotel Lutétia, had helped to establish a German Popular Front in February 1936.

But the counter-pressure was gaining strength. Between the sixth and seventh Comintern congresses, Stalin had established his personal ascendancy, and the time of the great purges was approaching.

When Münzenberg had been in Moscow in the spring of 1936, the purge had in fact started. Among his friends, the Hungarian Magyar had been accused of Trotskyism and Heinrich Süsskind had been expelled from the party—but the real terror had not yet begun. Zinoviev was not arrested until Münzenberg had returned to Paris, and although he had never been close to the man who, after Lenin and Trotsky, was number three in the early bolshevik hierarchy, he was nevertheless profoundly shaken by his summary conviction and execution.

Shortly after the Zinoviev trial, Münzenberg went to Amsterdam to attend the conference of the World Committee against War and Fascism. There he ran into the Dutch Trotskyite Sneevliet, who, barring his way, shouted: 'Traitor Cain, where is your brother Abel—Zinoviev?' Münzenberg did not answer.

In September 1936 he was ordered to Moscow for an extended stay, and arrived there in October, together with his wife. The Comintern chiefs—Manuilsky and Ercoli (Togliatti)—insisted that Münzenberg hand over his Paris affairs to the Czech communist Smeral and take charge of the Comintern Agit-Prop Section. Smeral was in fact already in Paris and had replaced Magnus (Richard Gyptner) in the Boulevard Arago office.

Meanwhile, Münzenberg was repeatedly called before the Comintern's international control commission and cross-examined about his activities, colleagues, associates, etc. The ICC returned again and again to the case of a certain Liane, a shorthand typist in Münzenberg's office, whose father had allegedly worked in Portugal for Franco. At first Münzenberg tried to make light of the imputation, but when it was brought up time and again, he understood.

Stalin's secret order to provide weapons and volunteers for the Spanish government provided Münzenberg with a chance to escape. His presence in Paris was needed, he claimed, to organise support for Spain. Togliatti had promised to procure the exit permits, but no passports had been forthcoming on the day of their projected departure. Münzenberg and Babette Gross returned to the hotel, convinced they were to suffer the fate of the many friends who had been executed or had disappeared, their fate unknown.

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The next day passports and exit visas were delivered. Münzenberg and his wife could leave Moscow.

ACCOUNTS of what happened when they returned to Paris are contradictory. Margarete Buber-Neumann writes:

'After Münzenberg had reached Paris, he lost his strength. He spent a considerable time in the suburban clinic of a certain Professor Chateaubriand. . . . Before entering it, he had already delegated his authority to Smeral and, while he was ill, completed the transfer of the Editions du Carrefour and of the other committees, including their accounts, cash, and office equipment. Babette collected the conveyances signed by Smeral, hiding them in a safe place in case of any attempts at defamation. . . . Throughout 1937 the Comintern repeatedly summoned Münzenberg back to Moscow. He did not comply. His break with the Comintern was finally completed.'

Other versions of the break allege that Münzenberg refused to hand over Comintern money unless his friend Kurt Sauerland was released; that he threatened to publish Comintern secrets if he were expelled from the German CP, and that he retained party status, although partly replaced by Bruno Frei and Ulbricht. I have been unable to substantiate these allegations.

Günther Nollau, claiming to throw some light on the affair, publishes a letter Münzenberg is said to have sent Stalin on 14 July 1937, in which he asks him for help against Ulbricht's interpretation of 'Stalinist policies'. Unfortunately, Nollau fails to authenticate this or the other letters reprinted in an appendix to his book.

Babette Gross offers the following comment: 'The various committees were handed over to Smeral during the winter months. Münzenberg feigned various illnesses in order to gain time. He withdrew, step by step, from the party's emigré organisations, but continued for a while to work for the People's Front Committee, addressing the last People's Front Conference in April 1937.'

Unfortunately, the proofs to substantiate Mrs. Gross' account of the transfer were destroyed. Babette Gross had hidden all the signed conveyances in the safe of a Catholic press agency in Paris. But, during the German occupation, les bons pères, as a precautionary measure, had burned all compromising material.

However, all these contradictions may well be more apparent than real. The transfer was, according to Babette Gross, a long drawn-out affair, and the fact that Münzenberg was only relieved of his functions in Spring 1937, does not suggest a complete rupture between him and his former superiors in the Comintern secretariat. At this stage he may still have hoped to gain approval for his arguments in the year-long quarrel with Ulbricht and the German CP leadership. Certainly other people at the time believed a reconciliation between Münzenberg and the Comintern still possible.

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A letter by the former Hungarian president, Count Mihaly Karolyi, informed Romain Rolland as late as 12 July 1938, that the writer had 'advised him (Münzenberg) to do penance. Finally under my influence and that of other comrades he has sent his cable to the Comintern announcing his willingness to go to Moscow'.

To Louis Fischer, the American journalist—at the time acting as an intermediary between Münzenberg and Dimitrov—Karolyi wrote (27 July 1938): 'Enclosed I am sending you a copy of the letter I wrote to Romain Rolland on behalf of Willi. I would be much obliged if you would let me know whether anything further has transpired, and whether Romain Rolland has been in touch with you.'

Karolyi's letter to Romain Rolland confirms the fact of Münzenberg's dismissal: 'You know, of course, that for about a year the situation between him and the Comintern has been tense. Münzenberg has committed the disciplinary offence of not going to Moscow when called for. This is also the reason why he was dismissed from the direction of German affairs.'

At a later stage, when Münzenberg broke his silence to refute communist accusations blaming him for the failure of the People's Front, he admitted having broken with the German CP. His informal circular 'To Some Friends' (26 June 1939) notes: 'It was my intention to consider as closed the disagreements I had with the leadership of the German Communist Party when I handed my letter of resignation to the Party. But the German Communist Party continues to publish falsified accounts of the origin and the course of the conflict. This, and the repeated attempts to hold me responsible for the collapse of the so-called Heinrich Mann Committee, will force me to abandon my reserve and to refute these misrepresentations by piecing together the real history of this Committee from the letters and documents in my possession, particularly those by Heinrich Mann.'

It was, therefore, in a mood of deep concern that, in April 1937, Münzenberg opened the first and only important congress of the German Popular Front in Paris. It was attended by perhaps 300 delegates of widely disparate party loyalties from all over Western Europe. In a superb speech which, to Ulbricht's fury, was widely applauded, Münzenberg urged all anti-Hitler forces to unite. He inveighed against communist equivocation and petty scheming (*gegen eine kleinliche Politik von Winkelzügen*) which was bound to destroy confidence. Heinrich Mann thanked him warmly and demonstratively.

Although deprived of the Comintern's organisational and financial support, Münzenberg was by no means inactive. He now supported the *Deutsche Freiheitspartei* of Otto Klepper, the former Prussian minister of finance, who had tried in New York and later in Paris to launch a similar movement called *Freiheit und Volk*. When it failed Carl Spiecker, the former chef de cabinet of Chancellor Brüning, helped to launch the *Deutsche Freiheitspartei*.

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According to Kersten, Münzenberg, with the help of his old friend Hans Schulz, had leaflets dropped over Germany from balloons, sent across the border from somewhere near Strasbourg. Margarete Buber-Neumann relates how the *Deutsche Freiheitsbriefe* were smuggled into Germany in the luggage of the French ambassador, M. François-Poncet. Radio transmissions to Germany were also started in 1938. They were broadcast from ships off shore. Apparently two such ships provided the service and when one caught fire it was replaced by a more seaworthy craft.

But this is to anticipate. In autumn 1937, Münzenberg and his group had arranged a meeting in Dijon attended, among others, by Heinrich Mann, who had just praised his *Propaganda als Waffe* in the face of devastating CP onslaughts. Kersten describes the prevailing atmosphere: 'For a while Ulbricht and his circle watched angrily Münzenberg's activities without committing themselves. Another Münzenberg trip to Moscow, where he might disappear for ever, still remained a possibility. They were also reluctant to make a public stand, because Münzenberg was popular and had a strong following among prominent refugees. Finally, they may also have received a hint from Moscow to bide their time.'

If so, they did not have to wait long. The *Deutsche Volkszeitung* (23 May 1937) published a resolution of the KPD central committee, expelling Münzenberg from the party for action contrary to party principles and for breaches of discipline. He was charged, more specifically, 'with intriguing against the Popular Front policy and refusing to carry out party directives'.

Münzenberg remained undaunted. When forced out of the offices at 83 Boulevard Montparnasse, he moved to 41 Boulevard Haussmann, where a new venture, the *Sebastian Brant Verlag*, started to publish books and magazines. Koestler's historical novel *Spartakus*, published in English under the title *The Gladiators*, was printing when the second world war broke out.

IN the autumn of 1938 Koestler became the editor of Münzenberg's new magazine *Die Zukunft* (The Future). 'The idea was to publish an independent German weekly which, apart from anti-Nazi propaganda, would work for the rapprochement of the various refugee groups and develop a programme for the day when Nazism was no more. We had quite a promising start, with contributions from Sigmund Freud, Thomas Mann, Harold Nicolson, Duff Cooper, Norman Angell, E. M. Forster, Aldous Huxley, and others. An editorial Brains Trust consisting of Manès Sperber (who by now had also left the KPD), Paul Sering (the pen-name of Richard Lowenthal) . . . Julius Steinberg the sociologist, Willy and myself. We also had a literary supplement, edited by Ludwig Marcuse, which was assembled to formulate and plan long-term, post-Hitlerian policies.' The first issue of *Die Zukunft* appeared on 12 October 1938.

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Koestler resigned from the editorship about Christmas 1938, and Werner Thormann, a member of the Catholic Centre Party, took over. According to Koestler, the paper continued to appear until the end of 1939 or the beginning of 1940. It closed down when most of its staff were sent to internment camps.

Another brainchild of Münzenberg was the *Union Franco-Allemande* (*Deutsch-Französische Union*), with Edouard Herriot as its president, where leading Frenchmen met prominent German and Austrian emigrés. Strong ties were established between the *Union* and *Die Zukunft*, which carried on its masthead the subtitle 'Organ der Deutsch-Französische Union'.

The success of *Die Zukunft* can be gauged from a Gestapo report describing the paper as 'the leading publication of refugees and of the German opposition in general'.

At that time Münzenberg had established close contact with Julius Deutsch and his Committee for War Relief for Republican Spain. The Committee had been created by Münzenberg in 1936 after the outbreak of the Civil War.

Even more important for Münzenberg was the broad leftist circle of German and Austrian emigrés which had gathered round Julius Deutsch; increasingly intimate cooperation with these socialist and social-democratic groups was a logical consequence of Münzenberg's break with the communists. It was also the result of various efforts to mould the socialist groups into a new, unified revolutionary German labour party.

The very first issue of *Die Zukunft* propagated Münzenberg's idea of creating a united German labour party, and the subject continued to be discussed in its columns.

And so, under the slogan *Unity Above All* Münzenberg, in the spring of 1939, divulged his reasons for leaving the communist party. In *Alles für die Einheit* he described his break with the Moscow-controlled Comintern as a 'separation from the apparatus—not from the movement'. This decision, he maintained, was made inevitable by the incompetence of a party apparatus which had become utterly bureaucratic and was successfully terrorised by Moscow. It had also failed to assess correctly the real nature and the ideological foundations of the triumphant Nazi movement.

In Münzenberg's opinion the future of Germany depended on the creation of 'a free socialist state' and a return to the classic doctrines of the labour movement. They must form the basis of a new, united German party free from outside interference.

Ever eager to translate ideas into political realities, Münzenberg founded a new group. Its aims were outlined at an informal meeting of about twenty close associates. One of them was the Gestapo agent V 49, who reported in detail (13 June 1939) to Gestapo-Chief Müller. On the question of cooperation Münzenberg was said to welcome it if supporters were not to lose contact with the KPD. He himself would remain a communist in spite of his expulsion and the campaign waged against

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him. However, he dissociated himself from the present KPD policies, and its habit of betraying troublesome party comrades to the police of the guest country in order to get them expelled. He denounced the treachery which had delivered 100 Czechs into Gestapo hands and expressed doubts whether Soviet comrades like Bukharin had in fact been Gestapo agents.

In the subsequent discussion Kersten is reported to have severely criticised the KPD leadership, saying that as long as Ulbricht and Raedel were in command in Paris, things would not improve. Fritz Granzow is said to have expressed himself in similar terms (which is interesting, considering he has for years been editor of *Neues Deutschland*, the official party paper of Ulbricht's post-war German Democratic Republic).

After the collapse of loyalist Spain, Münzenberg, horrified by the conditions under which the Republican refugees were interned, founded the relief committee *Hommes en Détresse* (Menschen in Not). Oddly enough, some of his closest associates, men like Füllenbach, Berger, and Koestler, were to benefit from his efforts when, at the beginning of the war, they were interned in the notorious Le Vernet camp.

All these activities, however, remained peripheral. Münzenberg's central preoccupation at the time was to find an acceptable basis for his new brand of socialism, and a series of public gatherings under the auspices of the *Zukunft* and of his own group, the *Freunde der Sozialistischen Einheit Deutschlands*, was held at the *Cercle des Nations*, 21, rue Casimir-Périer. On one occasion Münzenberg rejected the idea that the KPD could ever be received en bloc into the projected united party. At another meeting, when the former Prussian minister of finance, Otto Klepper, discussed the coming Germany and the European question, Münzenberg surprised some Nazi spies present—their reports have since been unearthed—by rejecting the Soviet Union as a model for the fourth Reich. He is said to have looked forward after the defeat of National Socialism to a united Europe in which Germany would play her part. Europe's economic viability depended on the inclusion of Germany, which, to avoid the pitfalls of the Soviet system, had to develop advanced forms of working-class organisation. A resolution of the Münzenberg group shows how this new revolutionary German socialist party was to avoid past mistakes. It recognised the need for real party democracy; without it the party of the German working class could not draw the right conclusions from its struggles and the experiences of its past.

This resolution, and the appeal by the British National Council of Labour to the German People, of 3 July 1939, was mailed to Germany by the *Freunde der Sozialistischen Einheit Deutschlands* from Denmark, Poland, Belgium, and France. But in spite of sustained efforts to create a joint socialist and democratic platform, the German Social-Democratic leadership remained suspicious of Münzenberg and rejected his overtures, although it could not prevent his collaboration with the more broad-minded leaders like Hilferding and Breitscheid.

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MONEY, after the break with Comintern, came from various sources. Aschberg, the pro-Soviet Swedish banker, who had been his friend for years, did not forsake him in the hour of need, and with influential people like Comert, Grumbach, and Gaston Palewski to back him, Münzenberg never experienced any real hardship in France.

But what now sustained him intellectually? In a way, no doubt, the fight against Hitler and Franco. He believed, however, in something more than fighting. Being a singularly positive and constructive man, he neither disintegrated nor lost his authority. Koestler recalled him at the height of his career: 'Though without a trace of pompousness or arrogance, his person emanated such authority that I have seen Socialist Cabinet Ministers, hardboiled bankers, and Austrian dukes, behave like schoolboys in his presence'; and after his excommunication: 'The real test of a politician's human greatness comes after his fall from power. Deprived of their imposing desks, secretaries, acolytes, and the trappings of rank and position, most of the former Cabinet Ministers and ex-Excellencies whom I have known in the lands of exile were like old men shivering in a Turkish bath. Willy was one of the rare exceptions. His personal magic, his authority and driving power remained the same to the end.'

Outwardly, then, he remained a resolute, active, relentlessly busy man, as flexible and adaptable as in the old days, superbly competent in the art of making friends and winning people. 'But from his inner circle he did not conceal his grief or even the deep gloom of depression', Kurt Kersten remarks. The murder of old friends affected him deeply. Men with whom he had worked closely since the days of his youth had disappeared in the Soviet Union, and nobody could tell what was in store for him personally.

He now belonged to the homeless Left. He, the organiser of the masses, who had bewitched and won them, was a displaced person, physically and mentally. But he kept on fighting; he fought Hitler and the coming war; he fought for a democratic and socialist Germany after Hitler, with such vigour that French right-wing circles mistook him for a German nationalist who was merely striving to resurrect another new, strong Germany.

Münzenberg had still to drain the cup of bitterness. He who had so loyally committed into Soviet hands his dream of world revolution, had to witness how Stalin concluded a pact with the arch-enemy. This was the time to speak! In a ringing declaration featured in *Die Zukunft* and signed by many prominent German and Austrian expatriates, Münzenberg denounced the Stalin-Hitler Pact. At the same time, *Sozialistische Konzentration* (intended to be his political testament) was published. It is an unequivocal rejection of Stalinism.

ON the outbreak of war the French government interned indiscriminately the bulk of political refugees, among them some of the

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most resolute and capable anti-fascists. Thanks to his excellent French connections, Münzenberg was one of the few to escape immediate internment. Werner Thormann, the editor of *Die Zukunft*, was arrested but soon released, and, together with those contributors still at large, tried to keep the periodical going. Kersten suggests that the French authorities put a radio transmitter at Münzenberg's disposal, over which he and Thormann broadcast to Germany. But Babette Gross explains that a transmitter set up by Jean Giraudoux may have transmitted articles from *Die Zukunft*. 'I doubt whether Thormann himself broadcast. At any rate, Münzenberg did not.'

The end was now drawing near. When the German armies attacked in May 1940, the remaining German refugees were interned. Münzenberg might have gone into hiding but preferred internment, as it offered the best chance of being evacuated from Paris. Babette Gross accompanied him to the Stade de Colombes, from where he was sent to Camp Chambarran near La Tour-du-Pin, between Lyon and Chambéry. There he was given the job of tending the camp commander's garden until, a few days before the French capitulation, orders were received to disband the company and to allow the refugees to make their own get-away from the rapidly advancing Germans. Late in the afternoon of 21 June 1940, Münzenberg and a group which included Otto Klepper, Kurt Wolf, Leopold Schwarzschild, editor of the *Neues Tagebuch*, the painter Ludwig Kainer, and others, reached a small town in the Isère valley and decided to pass the night there. They heard of a car for rent or sale in Montagne, a nearby hamlet. A car would be a godsend, and Münzenberg decided to secure it. According to Kersten, he set out in the company of Hartig, the trade unionist, and two unidentified young men. Before leaving he told his friends Hans Siemsen and Kurt Wolf about the car. This is the last that was seen or heard of him.

Four months later, under the date line Marcellin, 22 October, French papers featured the following news item: 'Two men out shooting from Montagne found the body of a man at the foot of an oak tree in the forest of Caugnet. Since some cord was still attached to his neck, he had apparently hanged himself some months previously. The gendarmerie of St. Marcellin investigating the case established the identity of the deceased. He was a certain Willi Münzenberg, 51 years old, writer, born in Erfurt.'

The late Kurt Kersten, who wrote the most detailed account of Münzenberg's last days, drew attention to certain inconsistencies in the story the St. Marcellin gendarmerie had apparently released to the press, and a number of details contained in their official report. The two versions are said to have differed in such particulars as the identity of the men who discovered the body and the material used for the alleged suicide, described once as cord and once as wire. Apparently no post mortem was held, but the police record makes it clear that apart from such belongings as visiting cards, letters and a set of platinum teeth, no valuables were found. Yet Münzenberg was known to have

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carried a largish sum of money. Unfortunately even this official file was later destroyed under the ten-year rule regarding the storage of police records. Moreover, no third person was ever permitted to inspect the file. Even to Babette Gross it was only read out at considerable speed. Mrs. Gross also learned of another report which had been requested either by the Préfecture in Lyon or by some Vichy government office. This report and the personal belongings to which it referred have never been traced.

Since Kersten obviously drew on information provided by Babette Gross, who made two visits to Montagne, St. Antoine and St. Marcellin after the war, I was somewhat surprised when my own investigations yielded a story which differed significantly from Kersten's account. I am unable to account for these discrepancies. I visited Montagne myself on 1 August 1964. Here is what I was told.

The mayor of Montagne, Monsieur J. Micoud, accosted me when I and my family were visiting the cemetery of Montagne. He introduced me to Monsieur Victor Gobertier, who, with his wife, runs a small café in Montagne, and who told me how he and a friend had actually discovered the body. It was found in the Forest of Caugnet, a few hundred metres outside Montagne along the road leading to St. Antoine, at the foot of a tree not far from the road and only some fifty yards inside the forest. The corpse was in a state of decomposition. Around the neck was a bit of cord. Not rope and certainly not wire. M. Gobertier used the expression 'un bout de cordon', and he emphasised this point. He said that he remembered it so well because he and his friend had both helped themselves to bits of that cord, which according to local superstition would bring luck to the huntsmen.

M. Gobertier also demonstrated to me the position in which the body was found, a sitting posture with both legs drawn up. In his view the body must have fallen off the tree before rigor mortis had set in. The body had not been covered with leaves. M. Gobertier would not venture a guess as to the cause of death. He had always presumed it to be suicide. He had wondered, however, how the corpse had remained undiscovered for so long, since it was near to the road, and the smell of the decomposing body was quite strong.

I should like to add that my two talks with M. Gobertier took place in the café, in French, and in the presence of several villagers including the mayor. As no comments were added by those present, I take it that what I was told by M. Gobertier was the account of Münzenberg's death generally accepted in Montagne.

According to Kersten Hans Siemsen was the last friend to see him alive on that afternoon of 21 June 1940. He quotes Siemsen as saying: 'I can still see him waving his hand, as he went away across the fields'. Münzenberg must have been alone when he left St. Antoine, the three others having presumably gone ahead. Other reports indicate that Münzenberg was seen with Valentin Hartig in a St. Antoine café. Kersten writes: 'According to villagers, four men were seen late that

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afternoon disappearing in the Forest of Caugnet after they had discussed in a local café arrangements regarding the renting of a car. Later only three men were seen to emerge from the forest. Who then were these men, of whom Hartig claims to have no knowledge? Hartig, with whom Münzenberg—according to Siemsen—went out to look for a car, had seemingly in some mysterious way lost trace of Münzenberg.'

The woman whose car the refugees had tried to obtain had, curiously enough, later become Madame Gobertier, wife of the man who found Münzenberg's body. But Montagne is a tiny place. Mme Gobertier told me that only one man had come to the café for the car. He spoke excellent French and had tried not to rent the car, but to buy it. The deal did not come off. Mme Gobertier later saw the man again in St. Marcellin. She had met only this man in Montagne, but heard later that four men had been together and had tried to obtain another car in the village.

The man who met Mme Gobertier cannot have been Münzenberg, who spoke very little French. He may have been Hartig. In fact, one possible reason why Münzenberg sought his company, although previously one of his political opponents, might have been that Hartig's command of the language made him indispensable in any attempted escape through war-time France.

Hartig appeared later in Paris where, as an interpreter, he accompanied delegations of French workers on their visits to Hitler Germany. He is reported to have been connected with the collaborationist trade union group *Atelier*. Hartig, who had come to France before 1933, settled after the second world war in West Germany. He has always denied any knowledge of Münzenberg's death and the identity of the two young men from camp Chambarran, with whom he and Münzenberg were supposed to drive to Marseille. No other survivor from Chambarran seems to have known these men either; since that fateful day they were never seen or heard of again.

Did Münzenberg commit suicide, or was he killed? The French authorities decided on suicide without a proper investigation or post mortem. Considering the chaos of the early post-capitulation days, such negligence is not surprising. It is, however, odd that the Gendarmerie's original hand-written report and Münzenberg's personal belongings have vanished. These, according to M. Micoud, who showed me the official receipt for them, were sent neither to Lyon nor Vichy, but to Grenoble.

Monsieur Micoud personally believed in the suicide theory. Münzenberg, when he arrived in Montagne, seemed so utterly exhausted, M. Micoud assured me, that he was left behind by his three companions. This information must have come second hand to the mayor who had previously told me that he was away from Montagne during the relevant period.

The official suicide verdict is mistrusted by some of Münzenberg's friends. Such an act, they point out, was out of keeping with a man of his character and temper, and doubly so at that particular moment. It is

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true that in the camp Münzenberg seemed changed. Kersten says he had been quiet, introspective, even shy, constantly worrying about his wife who, with many other German and Austrian women was interned far from Chambarran, at Gurs, in the Pyrenees. To others in the camp Münzenberg just seemed unusually listless.

Why should he have contemplated suicide at the very moment when his escape plans seemed particularly promising, when he was making his way to the south, where his friend Valeriu Marcu lived, who could help him? Why should he take his life now that he had hope of joining his wife? And, above all, why should he have tried to persuade his friend Siemsen to join them, if he was thinking of suicide?

Conceivably, Münzenberg might have been so depressed when the hoped-for car was not available that he decided to end it all. This theory, however, does not account for the mysterious disappearance of the two young men. For a long time Hartig's puzzling silence threw grave suspicion on him, but Babette Gross, who has talked to Hartig, is convinced of his complete innocence. Embarrassment about his later activities in occupied Paris accounts for his refusal to answer questions.

Nevertheless, the mystery of Münzenberg's death remains. The only alternative to suicide is murder. If Münzenberg did not kill himself, somebody else did, as nobody dies a natural death with a cord round his neck. Robbery can almost certainly be ruled out as a motive. We know from Hans Siemsen that Münzenberg carried about 2,000 francs, when he intended buying the car. Although the Gendarmerie fails to list money among the dead man's belongings, it mentions identification papers and a wristwatch. Killers for profit do not usually help the police with the identification of their victim, nor is it their habit to ignore valuables like fine watches.

If murder it was, then it is far more likely to have been a political one. The Nazis seem unlikely as the criminals. Although in 1935 Münzenberg was sentenced to death *in absentia*, and had for years been personally attacked by Hitler, Göring and Goebbels, the Gestapo, with German troops only a few miles away, would, it must be assumed, have much preferred to capture him alive.

There remain then the communists, and some circumstantial evidence does indeed suggest that NKVD agents committed the murder. Threats against Münzenberg's life were published in January 1940 by Walter Ulbricht's *Rundschau*. Moreover, the indecent haste with which pro-Soviet journalists spread the slander that he had been killed by one of the men he had denounced to the police, is a little strange. So is the story related to Babette Gross by a German refugee who lived during the war in the Grenoble area. In hiding he met a functionary of the German CP who assured him he had actually seen Münzenberg's body. In this context it is perhaps also to the point to remember what Margerete Buber-Neumann was told by Albert Vassart, until 1939 a Politbureau member of the French Communist Party, about the communist *Feme*, which systematically removed leading functionaries who

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had broken with the CP after the Stalin-Hitler Pact, or for other reasons. There is also the evidence of Kurt Müller, the former German communist who was kidnapped from the Federal Republic in 1950 and taken to East Germany, where his death sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. After his release to West Germany in 1955 he related how, when the name of Münzenberg came up during an interrogation, the examining magistrate remarked: '*mit ihm haben wir abgerechnet*' ('we settled accounts with him').

IN death, as in life, Willi Münzenberg's name was a legend. To orthodox communists and their followers the legend of a renegade and a Trotskyite. To others the legend of an unusually devoted and successful communist. Admittedly, he had left the communist party, and according to his wife, Trotsky caused him feelings of guilt all his life. But politically he never supported Stalin's enemy. On the contrary, if ever Münzenberg can be accused of having intellectually betrayed anybody, it must be Trotsky, who fought so doggedly to preserve the international character of the revolution.

Münzenberg was a Comintern agent. He worked illegally as well as legally. He wooed as well as abused people in the interest of communism. Yet his conspiratorial activities never became venomous or inhuman. He did not, like others, betray personal or political opponents to the NKVD or the Gestapo, and throughout his career he abhorred such Stalinist practices. His most successful activity was that of a propagandist.

> Münzenberg, Koestler explains, had hit on a new technique in mass propaganda, based on a simple observation: if a person gives money to a cause, he becomes emotionally involved in that cause. The greater the sacrifice, the stronger the bond; provided, of course, that the cause for which you are asked to make the sacrifice is brought to life in a vivid and imaginative manner—and that was Willy's speciality. He did not, for instance, ask the workers for charitable alms; he asked them to donate one day's wages 'as an act of solidarity with the Russian people'. 'Solidarity' instead of 'charity' became the keyword of his campaign, and the key-slogan of the WIR. Contributors were given WIR stamps, badges, medals, pictures of life in the USSR, busts of Marx and Lenin—each donation was forged into a link. Willy had found the pattern which he was to repeat in founding the World Committee for the Relief of the Victims of German Fascism and in his various Chinese, Spanish, and other relief campaigns: charity as a vehicle for political action.

The other reason for Münzenberg's success was the fact that the battles he fought were real and worthy ones. While Goebbels propagated racial discrimination, war, and hatred, Münzenberg called for solidarity with the famine-stricken millions of Russia and China, the homeless Japanese hit by earthquakes; he demanded solidarity with workers on strike, with oppressed colonial peoples, and with all who combated the destructive forces of the fascist dictators.

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Communist front organisations after the pattern set by Münzenberg continued to spring up after his death. During the second world war, Otto Katz—who, with Fritz Granzow, was among the first to desert Münzenberg after his break with the Comintern—started propaganda activities in Mexico under the name of André Simon. Having taken up a government appointment in his native Czechoslovakia after it became communist, Katz was tried and sentenced to death with Slansky.

Louis Dolivet, another of Münzenberg's former colleagues, was more successful. He went to the United States after the fall of France and became editor of *Free World*, a magazine founded by Alvarez del Vayo and Pierre Cot in New York with Olof Aschberg's money. It appeared in English, French, Spanish, Greek, and Chinese, and Aschberg published it in Swedish under the title of *Världshorisont*. *Free World* became, after the war, *United Nations World* and counted among its contributors Philip Noel-Baker, Benes, Lord Cecil, Madame Chiang Kai-shek, Einstein, Count Karolyi, Thomas Mann, and Henry Wallace. Later Dolivet returned to France and in cooperation with Pierre Cot, started a new monthly, the *Democratie combattante*. Dolivet was its managing editor, while the old Léon Jouhaux figured as its president and Henri Laugier as its political editor.

But none of the post-war communist front organisations has produced a leader of significance. Their best man still is old Ilya Ehrenburg. Moreover, the 1950s and 1960s are not the 1920s and 1930s. The world has grown wiser to the ways of mass media and their propaganda.

Willi Münzenberg, at least, was still privileged to fight for causes worth the battle. For peace before and during the first world war. For solidarity with the oppressed and the disinherited in the period between the wars. When finally he discovered that he, too, had been exploited and made to serve the mean stratagems of a despotic ruler, he had at least the integrity and the courage to leave the house which his intelligence and devotion had helped to build.

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# LETTERS FROM SERGEI DINAMOV

*Joseph Freeman*

WHEN I went to Moscow in the spring of 1926, among the things I took with me were a first edition of *Ulysses*, a copy of *In Our Time*, the only book so far published by Hemingway, and a contract with a New York publisher to do a volume on Soviet art and literature, the first American survey of the field. My plan was not to write a book, but to edit one consisting of a number of essays, each written by an outstanding Soviet authority in the field.

None of the Russians and Germans I knew gave Joyce a thought. His detractors were a handful of American comrades who said in pseudo-Marxist clichés what many a professional critic had said in pseudo-literary clichés. I also clashed with the comrades over a story by Isaac Babel entitled *The Kid*. They said it was counter-revolutionary because it showed that in war the Reds were as cruel as the Whites; I said the first duty of the writer was to tell the truth and this was the first duty of revolution, too.

The war over *Ulysses* and *The Kid* was waged in the offices of the Comintern, where I worked as translator; at parties in the Lux Hotel, which housed Comintern leaders and employees from abroad; and in the corridor outside the Throne Room of the Kremlin during the Sixth Plenum of the Comintern executive. In spite of this literary war, the comrades and I remained friends. The era when a difference of opinion would be treated as a capital crime was a decade away and we were unaware of it.

The Soviet writers I saw most often were Ivan Kashkin, professor of American literature at Moscow University and a critic of great perception, and red-cheeked, earnest Sergei Dinamov, editor of *Na Literaturnom Postu*, magazine of RAPP, the Association of Proletarian Writers. Both, like myself, were in their late twenties. When Kashkin asked who were the best of the new American writers, I named Hemingway and gave him a copy of *In Our Time*. He translated one of the stories for *Nasha Put* (Our Way), the bilingual magazine he edited for his students. This was the first time Hemingway's work was published in Russia.

Like everybody in Russia at that time, the writers lived in a world beleaguered and inspired. Fresh in their memory was the Great War, the fall of the Winter Palace, the October Revolution, the Civil War, the good news that world socialism was on the way to fulfil its historic mission of transforming man and the world. Lenin had been dead only two and a half years; his spirit was omnipresent, his successor undetermined.

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The writers I met spoke only of literature, but politics was everywhere. Beskin, head of the foreign division of the State Publishing House, told me that Boris Pilnyak, considered by many the best contemporary writer of Russian prose, was in Tokyo, waiting for the end of the scandal he had provoked by publishing two stories which attacked the new elite. The first, *Termites*, accused the bureaucracy of destroying culture; the second, *The Other Side of the Moon*, charged Stalin with responsibility for the recent death of War Commissar Frunze. To make sure nobody missed the point, Pilnyak prefaced his story with a disclaimer: This story does not refer to the recent death of Comrade Frunze.

Everybody was worried by the spread of cynicism and delinquency among the young, and this intensified the argument that had been raging over Yesenin since the poet's suicide at the end of 1925. Yesenin had been a wild boy with the bottle and a devil with women; this was called Yeseninism and was considered a factor in the prevalence of hooliganism, alcoholism, sexual promiscuity, and drug addiction.

Bukharin blamed the popularity of Yeseninism partly on the fact that the communists served up 'astonishingly monotonous ideological food'. He urged proletarian writers to pay more attention to 'live people . . . to life in all its variegated colours'.

I reported Bukharin's remarks in an article which appeared in the May 1927 issue of the *New Masses*. In this I repeated passages from Trotsky's tribute to Yesenin, which I had published in the same magazine in June 1926.

Personal relations among Soviet writers were cordial no matter to what literary group they belonged. Dinamov introduced me to fellow travellers he admired, among them Vyacheslav Polonsky, editor of *Novy Mir*. And we had a common friend in Tamara, a heroine of the Civil War in the Caucasus, who had been fired from her post in the Party and obliged to work in a factory because she was a Trotskyite.

Dinamov thought I spent too much time with American and German comrades in the Lux. 'You should not spend so much time with comrades from the old world', he said. 'You should meet more Russian comrades who have had new experiences.'

He liked literary conversations. At these he would speak about the new Soviet literature; Aseyev, the Futurist poet and a friend of Mayakovsky, would read his poetry; Osip Beskin would tell us about his childhood in a bourgeois family and threaten to write a novel about it.

Dinamov often invited me to his apartment, crowded with books in Russian and English. On the mantelpiece was a photo of him in Red Army uniform; he was a civil war veteran. Then there was the time he took me to a *vecherinka* given by the R's. The husband, tall and immensely fat, was a high official in the Soviet banking system; his wife was a thin, athletic blonde with a gentle smile. David was a Jew, Tanya a Cossack. They had both been through the civil war, he as a soldier,

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she as a nurse. They were both active Party members, both passionately fond of literature.

The evening I first visited the R's their house was crowded with Moscow writers. Every chair was filled and on the floor sat dark, handsome Leonid Leonov, then in his middle twenties; the novelist was surrounded by a group of admirers. The young poet Vera Inber was there, too, and the grey-bearded poet Osip Mandelstam. Present also was Lozovsky, head of the Profintern. He did not join in the drinking, but sat silent and dignified in his old frock coat and white shirt. When one of the poets recited his verse, Lozovsky closed his eyes reverently. Later he sang us songs of the 1905 revolution.

It was at the R's that I met Tamara. Before being removed from her Party post, she had spent two years with the Soviet Embassy in London and knew English well. She was steeped in Russian literature, classical and contemporary, admired the writing of Boris Pilnyak, and enjoyed Michael Arlen's *The Green Hat*. Tamara and I saw a good deal of each other and she spoke to me freely about the Opposition. Her lover, a Georgian like herself, had just been released from the prison where he had spent two years to atone for his Trotskyism. Tamara told me Stalin was as cruel in private as in public life. She knew some of the top boyars well and felt they represented Thermidor, the betrayal of the Revolution in the interests of the new elite and at the expense of the people.

One night she told me a terrible thing had happened. For the first time since 1917 the workers were voicing antisemitic sentiments. Tamara had been born and reared in the Orthodox church. She said Stalin was using antisemitism as a weapon against Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Radek, and other Jewish leaders of the Opposition, but the evil would not stop there. 'Nothing can be worse for the Revolution than anti-semitism', she said.

Dinamov found pleasure in the experiments carried on by Soviet writers; there seemed to be no limit to their variety. One night we went to the Olympiad of Poets at the Second State Circus, next door to the Meyerhold Theatre. Every seat in the immense tented dome, all the way up to the topmost gallery, was filled with the crowd that had come to hear poets of every group, school, and tendency recite their verse. All were represented—Symbolists, Futurists, Constructivists, Peasant poets, Proletarian poets.

The sensation of the evening was the Con-Fun school. It consisted of one unknown poet who now stood up to explain its principles. He wore an orange scarf and a coarse sack shirt on which he had painted slogans in bright colours. He started to read a manifesto.

'Cut out the speech!' voices from the gallery shouted. 'Read your poems!'

The chairman of the Olympiad, Professor Kagan, granted the poet ten minutes in which to state his principles and recite his verse. The poet explained that Con-Fun stood for Construction and Function. Poetry

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should be seen, not heard. It was a waste of time for poets to recite their verse; poetry was written for the printed page and should be read with the eye. Like everybody else that evening, the prophet of Con-Fun made the usual references to the world situation and the building of socialism. Then, in a rich baritone, he proceeded to sing a long plaintive ballad.

'He is quite mad', Dinamov told me. 'A leftover of the old life. The village fool. Ivanka Durachok.' And he added with pride: 'What a wide range we have!'

Polonsky invited me to contribute an essay to *Novy Mir*. As in the case of everything of mine that was published in the Soviet literary press, I wrote the essay in English and it was translated. As a rule, however, the Russians reprinted what I had already published in the United States. When my essay appeared in *Novy Mir* it was accompanied by a note in which the editors disclaimed responsibility for its Freudian viewpoint. They published the essay without changing a word.

SHORTLY after my return to New York in the spring of 1927, Sergei Dinamov and I began a literary correspondence that went on for nearly a decade. Our letters were personal and, until now, have never appeared in print.

For the sake of unity, the letters presented below are all by Dinamov. Most of them are taken from the year 1927; a few others are added to clear up a point or two. Dinamov wrote his letters in English; I have left his language as he wrote it. He often clarified a word by adding its Russian equivalent in parenthesis; he usually gave the titles of books in both languages.

*June 24, 1927*: Dear Joe! Very many thanks for your kindness. I have received Manhattan, Eric Dorn,[1] New Masses, N.Y. Times Book Review. . . . But you are very busy and I am afraid it is difficult for you to care about my business. By reason of it I want very much to do something for you. But what? I suppose I could help your editorship on Soviet culture. As you know, I am member of Literary Institute of USSR and State Academy of Art-Sciences, and know all our critic-writers. I think you must receive the articles from following persons.

*Polonsky*: The Preface. *Kogan*: Proletarian Literature. *Shingovatov*: The sketch about Maxim Gorky. *Vyacheslav Polonsky*: Russian Revolution Plakats (he has the book about it). *D. Gorbov*: Russian Foreign Literature—writer immigrants. Ivan Ivanovitch [Anisimov]: Soviet Motion Pictures.

When I know the plan of a book I should write more about it, but believe me, Joe, I shall do all that I can. Do you want to receive books about Russian painting? Let me know and I shall send them to you.

*July 9*: Your 'American Notes' is excellent and we publish it with greatest pleasure. Write regularly! . . . Perhaps Dos Passos can write

[1] *Manhattan Transfer*, by John Dos Passos; *Eric Dorn*, by Ben Hecht.

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about Mexico City. . . . Priboi is dead. I hope to see you in New York in October, I hope . . .

*July 27*: Gossisdat shall publish the selected works by Liam O'Flaherty, Patrick McGill and Frank Norris under my editorship. Zemlya y Fabrika shall publish the works of Theodore Dreiser also under my editorship. I shall be very glad if you, Joe, give me articles about Frank Norris and Theodore Dreiser.

Now I am reading 'Liberator' for 1922. How you grow from this time! I am sending you Na Literaturnom Postu with my article and with your portrait. I have read all books by Floyd Dell and shall write about them in Petchyat y Revolyutsia in autumn. . . . I shall send you all the best Russian books and I am very sorry we have not them now by reason of summer. I have received from you 'Chains', 'Eric Dorn' and 'Manhattan Transfer'.

*Undated 1927*: *Vladimir Lidin*: *Otstoopnik* (*The Apostate*). *A Novel. Published by Gossisdat.* The young worker is studying in Moscow. He is attracted to the bohemian life and becomes criminal. Brilliant book, but the author is not a revolutionist, he sees our young people only with a negative point of view.

*Tarasov-Rodionov*: *Fevral* (*February*): *A Novel-Chronicle.* First chapter of a trilogy 'Tyajolie Shagi' (Difficult Steps). Published by Gossisdat. The best book about our February revolution. The author knows the facts very well. His memoirs are very vivid and interesting. I think it should be very well to translate this book into English and publish it in shorter edition.

*Leonid Leonov*: *'Vor'* (*The Thief*): *A Novel.* Leonov is the best Russian writer 'popootchik'. He writes in this novel about superfluous, useless people of revolution—thieves, circus performers, etc.

*Uriy Olesha*: *'Zavist'* (*Envy*): *Published by Zemlya y Fabrika.* 'Envy' is the first book of Olesha but our critics have said that he is one of the best writers of Soviet Russia. In this novel he writes about the decay of the people of the old regime who envy the new life.

*August 4*. 'Oil' [by Upton Sinclair] is now publishing by Gossisdat. O'Flaherty will come to Moscow, maybe only next year: he has no money. Now I try very much to receive for him 1,000 rubles for his rights in Soviet Russia. . . . Voronsky now is not editor-in-chief of 'Krasnaya Nov'[2] and all popuchiki don't want to give their works to new editors—Fritche, Raskolnikov, Vassilevsky. Raskolnikov is a member of RAPP.

*August 8*: I include in this letter the good poem by Asseyev (you know him) about Sakko and Vanzetty. I should like very much to receive the book The Hobo by Nels Anderson (The University of Chicago Press, 1923). I shall write about hobo-writers in my book and Nels Anderson gives a study of hobo problems.

[2] A. K. Voronsky was charged with Trotskyism.

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*August 10*: I sent you 8th August Zavolye Pilnyaka and the Russian edition of 'Humpty Dumpty' [by Ben Hecht] with my preface. I have received from O'Calahan your article in Quarterly about Wilsonian Literature. I am quite sure we publish it in Na Literaturnom Postu or Pechyat y Revolutsiye or Krasnaya Nov. . . .

We have received from H. G. Wells his 'Meanwhile' for the Russian edition. He does not want to take payment from us because the English papers can blame him for 'the Red money'.

I intend to publish 'Americana' by Mencken (for 1925 and 1926) in one volume.

*September 6*: I have received your letters of 3 September and some others. I am so glad to hear from you so often because it is very useful for me. Many thanks for the clippings, 'The Advance', etc. (It is very kind that you have written about the leaders of 'The Advance') and the complete information about 'The Novel of Tomorrow'. . .

Together with it I am sending . . . *Lunacharsky*: *O Bit*. I have remarked the most interesting places of it. The point of view of Lunacharsky is the point of view of Communist Party. He writes against 'free love' and easy love of young communists. The theory of them: when I am thirsty—I drink; when I want the women—I have them; it is the theory of 'the glass of water'.

Kashkin was very ill and now does not work.

Then about Gussiev. The young-communist publicist Ippolit has written the foolish book about the young-communist love, etick, etc. And Gussiev wrote against him. It was not discussion and it is not so interesting.

As we see on personal conduct, communist can have 1, 2, 3 or more women, communist can drinks, communist can dresses well, if it does not destroy the revolution. The life of the communist is not only private life but it is social one. Of course, our writers (Arosiev in particular) has written about personal conduct and if you want I can send some books to you.

Now I am reading the last number of 'Krasnaya Nov'. The notable old writer C. Y. Elpatchevsky writes about Maxim Gorky that he is the man of a fairy-story. Russia of Gorky is wonderful country: 'he is not politician because the politic and the fairy-story are other things. (2) About Chekhov—he lived in Crimea but always tried to be in Moscow; Chekhov didn't like the politic but he changed his attitude to it in 1905; (3) Tolstoy—Leo—he looked as a literally peasant—moozhik; and he told Elpatchevsky as a enemy of socialism.

Tretyakov writes about China. . . .

As you know, I work in the State Publishing House, the State Academy of Artistic Sciences, the Institute of Scientific Research in Literature and Languages and also I am a member of the Scientific Research Committee of the All-Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (VAPP).

*September 7*: We have here no very interesting books on Soviet culture. If you intend to publish something about this subject—translate special number of Pechyat y Revolyutsia, where are the articles on art, literature, science, movie in the past ten years.

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*September 14*: On Tuesday I shall send you collection of books about literature and culture since 1917. But there are no good books about Soviet kino and the theatre. If you wish I can get articles about them from our writers.

*September 20*: Your article about Eisenstein is published. . . . I am afraid this change of 'Krasnaya Nov' is not right. . . .

Our critics noise very much of 'Razgrom' by Fadeyev. Fritche, Averbach, Zonin and Voronsky (!!) decide it is the best work of proletarian literature. I have not read it but I shall read it nextly and send it to you with my opinion. Together with this letter I am sending the Russian edition of 'Humpty Dumpty' by Ben Hecht with my introduction. . . . Eisenstein is now making the new movie-play about October. . . . You are very, very good fellow: I know I do less for you than you do for me. . . . Together with this letter I am sending:

(1) *Catastrophe by Vessalko*: He is one from our first proletarian writers (1887–1920). The article about him is in the book by Zonin (I send it also). He wrote also about East, but that is not interesting. Catastrophe is the novel about the worker and revolutionary life before revolution. Vessalko—the spring of our contemporary literature.

(2) *The Beginning of Proletarian Literature, by A. Zonin.* Zonin is one of the leaders of VAPP. It is the first critical-book. The subject is very interesting. Zonin is talented boy—and I believe that his book will be useful for you (except his last 'cheap' chapter).

*October 11*: Together with this letter I am sending you some books.

(1) *Pantaleimon Romanov's The Right to Life.* It is short-story about ordinary Russian writer which is very afraid to be out of life and keeps his beat of bread. His soul is the soul of the past, he don't like the political life. Our life is very hard for him, he tries very much to be like other Soviet writers but it is impossible for him. At last the self-confident. Is Romanov right? Not at all, but I think the problem is very serious. We have doubtless such pseudo-Soviet writers. But Romanov writes as H. Bell Wright and he don't show human life very deeply.

(2) *How is our young people*? (*Kakove zhe nasha molodyozh*?). It is the book of sex-life of our young people (students, young communists). *Gussiev* writes: the background (basis) of a sex-revelry of intellectual y.p. [young people] are the bad life-conditions. The influence of defeated classes is very important fact and we cannot miss it. The true-pictures of a sex-revelry of y.p. are useful for us (Romanov, Malashkin, Gumilevsky).

*Yaroslavsky*: Lenin is right when he recommends the sex-moderation, although he is against 'filistier'. We must be strong. In the days of revolution of 1905 we had no sex-problem but after our defeat (1907, etc.) we had it.

*October 14*: Together with this letter I am sending you the following books. . . .

(1) *The Power of Soviet for 10 Years* (*Vlast Sovyetov za 10 Lyet*). It is the account about our life from October 1917. The articles by

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Lunarcharsky, Voronsky, etc., with the very many illustrations and portraits.

(2) *About Writer's Ethic, Literary Holiganstvo and Bohemia. O pisatyelskoi Etike, Literaturnom Khooliganstvo-Bogeme.* Bukharin writes: Eseninshchina is very dangerous for our young-people. Esenin is the poet of negative sides of Russian village. Our young-people likes it because he has no labor-experience and, secondly, our proletarian and revolutionary writers write so tiresome sometimes and without real life.

(3) *Novokhmenon (Mieskom of Moscow writers).* In Moscow there are 4,892 writers, scientificists, playwrighters, etc. (Free literary profession). 50 percent of them are and were workers. 60 percent live hard. *Ingulov*: Ordinary salary of writer is about 1,600 rubles yearly. *Polonsky*: Our young writers try to live by (or with?) only literature. It is not right. They must work, they must have not only literary profession. . . .

*October 27*: Pravda will publish new magazine, 'Revolution and Culture'. . . .

(1) *Chamber Theatre by Apushkin*: *Kamerni Teatre.* Apushkin is not Marxist but he is ordinary critic and his book has no broad interest. It is ordinary book on this subject and I am sending it. . . . The CT opened in 1914. The purpose of the manager of it, Tairov, was instead of a naturalistic (Art-Theatre) and conditional (yelovni) unreal (Meyerhold) theatres to create a new theatre of the artist. The general point of view of Tairov was the growth of the artist and the organization of all theatre-elements (decoration, gesture, voice). It was reached in the season of 1917–1918. The form of art then was so high but the CT didn't look for the contents, and was going only toward the new form. The consequence of it was a growth of the strong influence of the manager of the CT, Tairov, and the separation from life. Only after the return of the CT from abroad (1923–1924) this position was changed and were performed 'The Man Who was Thursday' by Chesterton, St. Joan by Shaw, Hairy Ape by O'Neil, etc. Now the CT comes to the beginning of its life-cycle; the artist again is the axle of the theatre. . . . The CT try very much to be connected with life. So writes Apishkin, not I!

(2) *Li-Yan, Who is an Obstinate Man*: *by Serge Tretyakov.* It is a new poem on China. Chinese-boy and his family are very poor but the Chinese philosopher teaches them that they must become accustomed to it. At last the boy goes to the red. This poem is very interesting by its sounds. (I have remarked them.)

(3) *The Moon with the Right Side or Strange Love by Sergey Malashkin*: *Luna s pravoi storonoi.* This little novel is a mode of the season. It is discussed in disputes, lectures, in magazines, etc. It is the story on the daughter of rich peasant (Kulak). When she was in the village—she was good. When she begun to learn in the town—she was become the time of bad roads (raskutnika). Author writes how young-communists drink, 'to inhale', to have many men or women (the heroine of this novel has sometimes 6 men in the night). At shortly, he writes about the decay of young communists. Is it true? I am quite sure—no. Of course, we and young-communists have some elements of decay

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because we live in the crossing-period—but the pictures by Malashkin are not true in whole. He sees so little—and to write so much. But I am sending it to you—you must see our life not only with my eyes.

(4) Lenin's Moral (V. I. Lenin: O Moral). Is there the communist moral? Lenin asks, and he answers: Yes, there is. Our moral has its ground in the class-struggle of worker-class. Moral is the method of growth of mankind. Communist don't must study very much sex-problems because he has more serious tasks. At first, and this tendency is the fear of bourgeois-moral and cant, the sex-problem is the part of the social-problem and when we study sex too much we forget this. In Germany communists are interested very much in the sex, but they more think about the problem of the Soviets in their country, women workers, unemployers, etc. The free love is not pooblichni dom (the house of prostitution). 'I don't want to preach asketic life. Communism brings the world joy, vigor and free-love. But the superfluity of sex-love is not vigor, but the lack of one.' The birth control (see p. 68) is good thing but we must fight against malthuzian-theory because it is cowardliness.

*December 31*: Here was conferention of proletarian writers of the world that elected you as American editor of Proletarian Writers Magazine of Foreign Literature (Vestnik Inostrani Literature). This magazine will be published monthly with 1928. I am associate editor of it and head of the Anglo-American section. . . .

In first number of this magazine we shall publish 'The Innocents' by Sinclair Lewis, 'Americana' by Mencken. We shall publish next months, 'The Devil's Dictionary' by Ambrose Bierce, some poems by Joe Freeman, M. Gold, C. Sandburg, James Rorty, Joe Hill, 'The Poor' by Stacey Hyde (English worker), 'Awakening' by Galsworthy; the article Moscow communist Negro worker Carl Jones on Negro-workers of USA; the article by nephew of Rabindranath Tagore, Comrade Spenser, about Tagore's poetry.

Together with it I am sending you 'Na Literaturnom Postu' where we published most materials about conferention. I published your article about the book on Sacco and Vanzetty by E. Lyons in 'Novy Mir'. I shall send you soon the following books: (1) P. Romanov, Bez Cheromukhi; (2) Yuri Libidisnky: Kommunisti; (3) V. Polonsky: Na Literaturnyie Temi; (4) A. V. Lunacharsky's 10-Lyet Kulturnovo Stroitelstva; (5) L. Averbach: Kulturnaya Revolutsia. Is published your articles about Louis Lozowick and 'Below the Battle'.

Tamara is now very bad in party position. I am afraid that she will be excluded from the party. When she had met me, she always ask me about you.

WITH this letter, Dinamov sent me the printed prospectus of the *Magazine of Foreign Literature* (Vestnik Inostrannoi Literatury). It listed A. V. Lunacharsky as responsible editor: the editorial board consisted of Lunacharsky, Leopold Averbach, Bela Illes, Johannes Becher, Paul Vaillant-Couturier, Joseph Freeman, Panait Istrati, Ture Nurman and F. Weisskopf.

The prospectus announced that forthcoming issues of the magazine would contain work by Arnold Bennett, Pio Baroja, Joseph Conrad,

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Theodore Dreiser, Waldo Frank, John Galsworthy, André Gide, Kurt Kleber, Liam O'Flaherty, H. L. Mencken, John Dos Passos, Luigi Pirandello, Italo Svevo, Ernst Toller, H. G. Wells, and others. It would also publish work by Leon Balzagette, Henri Barbusse, Jean-Richard Bloch, Georges Duhamel, Leonhard Frank, Heinrich Mann, Scott Nearing, Romain Rolland, Jules Romains, Miguel de Unamuno, Charles Vildrac, Franz Werfel, and others.

In the summer of 1929 Dinamov was still active in the *Magazine of Foreign Literature*. On 18 August he wrote: 'I have finished my new book (in collaboration with Ivan [Anisimov] *The Four Literatures: American, English, French, German*. My two articles were recently published here—one about the problem of intellectual people and the other on the ideology of scientific and technical people. My article on H. G. Wells will be published soon.'

A year later Dinamov indicated that he was having trouble with some of the people who were now in control of the magazine. On 6 June 1930 he wrote: 'The best thanks for *Voices of October*—it is a very good book. I can do nothing about your articles in the *Vestnik*—I am not connected with this magazine.'

On 31 July 1930: 'I do not work in the *Vestnik* because the critical section of it is not Marxian; the second reason is that I am not bohemian, but a member of the party. . . . I am now the professor of the first Moscow State University (theory of literature) and the director of the scientific institute of literature and language—very hard work certainly.'

Later, in an undated letter of 1930: 'Ivan and I don't work now in the *Magazine of Foreign Literature*. It is impossible to work with Averbach.' At that time the name Averbach meant nothing to any of us in New York.

That year saw the triumph of those who wanted to make literature a political weapon. The central committee resolution of 1924, with its emphasis on literary freedom in the context of socialism, was scrapped, and a group of selected writers was given hegemony over the field of literature. Everything was redefined. Terms like literature, proletarian, Marxist, communism acquired meanings they did not have in the twenties.

It took time for this to become clear. The change was formally made at the world conference on literature which met at Kharkov in 1930. I was not among the American writers who were invited to attend. Those who manipulated these matters understood from the beginning that, by temperament and training, I would not and could not fit into the new scheme of things.

The Kharkov conference set up a new type of organisation, The International Union of Revolutionary Writers. This issued a new magazine, *Literature of the World Revolution*. The magazine was edited by new men, chief among them Leopold Averbach, Grand Inquisitor of the new dispensation. For the most part the contributors were also new. The names of Romain Rolland and Henri Barbusse appeared on the masthead; after a while the magazine attacked both men. Barbusse was denounced on the ground that he was 'unable to free himself of the last traces of bourgeois prejudice'.

So, too, the magazine reprinted Plekhanov's essay on 'Art and Life', and followed it with an editorial which tore Plekhanov to pieces. Another

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article denounced the interest of Western Europe in the ideas of Freud as 'a symptom of decadence'. The era of humanism was over, the brigands were riding again. Soon the magazine dropped its literary mask and became little more than an implacable polemic against Trotsky.

Things are clearer now, more than thirty years after the event. In those days, when things were about to happen which nobody foresaw, I could only feel my way through the forest with the aid of the imagination of the thought of the heart.

In 1927 it was possible for Sergei Dinamov, an orthodox party member, to write with sympathy and concern about Tamara, a Trotskyite about to be expelled from the party. A decade and a half later I was told that both had 'disappeared' in the purges.

Now, with infinity between the past and the present, I like to remember that amid his prodigious labours ('it is hard for the communist to do a book', he wrote me in 1928) Dinamov finally published his study of Edgar Allan Poe; and that now and then he even managed to find a moment or two of fun. 'When I was in Crimea', he wrote me in 1927, 'I drank wine very much and now I am not totally abstinent, as you knew me'.

As for Tamara, she was the salt of the earth and, now as ever, the bust outlasts the throne; the coin, Tiberius; the Green Hat, the firing squad.


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# PASSAGE TO RUSSIA, II

*Esther Corey*

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NOW that I was in the Mecca of the Revolution, I could go to meetings and study the revolution at first hand. I would learn what Bolshevism meant from the leaders themselves. I attended meeting after meeting, listening in rapt attention to the inspirational speeches of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, Lenin, Trotsky and other Bolshevik orators. Trotsky seemed to me the most brilliant speaker of them all. He played upon the Russian language as a great virtuoso plays upon his instrument, but there was always in his manner the cold awareness of a man making history which left me more awed than enraptured.

Lenin had the most profound effect upon me. He employed no high-flown revolutionary phrases, nor did his voice ring through the hall. He spoke quietly but with determination, using the same matter-of-fact tone to groups of peasants and his own co-workers in the Party as to foreign delegates. The burden of his remarks was this: 'There is a big job to be done. There are problems. How are we going to do the job? How can we solve the problems?' Lenin was asking you as much as telling you, and you felt that he was talking to you, personally. If you were confused or had any doubts, they vanished before his assurance. You began, instead, to share his troubles, determined to do your utmost to help solve these problems.

If Trotsky was wine for my muddled head, then Lenin was pure, clear spring water. I sought out every opportunity to hear him. Once there was a meeting of peasants' delegates who had come from every corner of agricultural Russia. In Moscow, we had heard that there was starvation in the provinces, and it was hinted that the peasants were on the verge of revolt. I secured a pass and went to that meeting. When I arrived, the chairman had just introduced the Commissar for Agriculture, Sosnovsky. He had scarcely opened his mouth before he was shouted down by the angry crowd.

They jeered. 'You took our horses and our men for your civil war. And now you want crops! You took our last sack of grain! What do you expect us to use for seed?' Loud, insistent voices filled the hall, rising to an ominous crescendo. In vain the chairman begged for order.

Lenin rose from his chair on the platform and walked forward. He stood in silence for a moment, then he said slowly, 'Yes, we did take your horses'. A sudden hush fell over the audience as he continued, 'We took your horses and your men to save your land from the Whites'. He went on, admitting every hardship the peasants faced. Soon he was in control of the meeting. The peasants were listening to his every word. All at once, he changed his tone. Selecting a peasant from the

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audience at random, Lenin pointed a finger at him and began to chide him as one would a child.

'You there, with the red nose! Admit it now. You've been drinking, haven't you? And playing cards, and spending your time in grumbling instead of working twice as hard. Am I right?' Calmly, he proceeded to outline plans and suggest ways in which these peasants could help in the common effort. At the end of the meeting there were no boos, only cheers.

The following day I reported on the meeting to my colleagues at the office. It had not even been mentioned in *Pravda*, but I did not ask why news of such an important assemblage had been ignored.

During this time my office became busier than ever. The proceedings of the congress were being edited and translated. Due to inadequate stenographic help, I often had to seek out the speaker in question and get him to correct his own speech and fill in blank spaces which the stenographer had not recorded. Then I would send the speech for translation into the other official languages (French, English, German, or Russian).

Of the speeches, Zinoviev's tended to be the longest and had frequent gaps. He went over them carefully enough before returning the manuscripts to me, but I noticed that wherever the stenographer had inserted the word 'Applause', Zinoviev amended the insertion to 'Continuous, enthusiastic applause'. This vanity struck me as unbecoming and I asked Malygina what she thought about it. She offered no comment of her own, but instead quoted Bukharin: 'We are free of the bourgeois ideology, but our feet still stick in the bourgeois mud'.

During the first months many things I saw disturbed me, but the simplicity of Marxist answers, with their certainty in arguments and their assurance about the future, squelched any doubts in my mind. I considered myself a sincere revolutionist, yet I had only the vaguest notion of what revolution really meant. I expected it to produce all the blessings for which man has always yearned—peace, brotherhood, and human dignity. Perhaps each of us who responded to the revolutionary fervour attributed to it his own needs and the eventual fulfilment of his own strivings. Some people wanted peace, some wanted economic security, some wanted an end to social discrimination. Others sought power; still others sought excitement.

As for Marxism, how many of us had studied its principles before embracing the faith? I, myself, had read only its primer, *The Communist Manifesto*. Our world had collapsed and we searched for a new one. There was an intangible spirit which was very infectious, an optimism, a conviction that any obstacle in the path of man's progress could be conquered. This spirit took hold of us and swept us along. I felt it while walking in the streets of Moscow, and on the 'Subbotniki', singing revolutionary songs.

'Subbotniki' (from the Russian word for Saturday, Subbota) were our free Saturday afternoons which we donated to work for the state.

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It was done in order to show good will on the part of the people. I doubt whether it showed great results in work accomplished. We used to gather after work in front of our office and march to the place assigned, which sometimes took over an hour. Unused to physical work, such as digging or clearing away debris, we tired easily and did not work too efficiently. After the work was done we received a pound of black bread which we from the Comintern did not need because Comintern rations were plentiful, and then we marched through the streets of Moscow singing revolutionary songs. I loved these afternoons, the spirit was wonderful. As we marched back, singing, it was like returning from a picnic or from mountain climbing, but this time with a purpose—for the revolution.

This spirit pervaded the evening gatherings at the Delovoy Dvor, where groups of us, sharing the same enthusiasm despite differences in background and nationality, would spend half the night in discussion and song.

Among the guests at the Delovoy Dvor was Krumina, a pale, thin young woman who wore thick-lensed glasses and belonged to the inner circle of the Communist Party. Her manner was abrupt. Her one interest seemed to be the Revolution. Her brother was then editor of *Econimicheskaya Zhizn* (Economic Life). Her husband had been killed in the Civil War before her eyes. Three months after her husband's death, her boy was born. Once, at a gathering in the Delovoy Dvor, she sat down at the piano and with grotesque seriousness began to play Beethoven's *Eroica*, to which she recited in German from a book in front of her. The book was *Moscow, 1920* by a German economist who wrote it after a four-week sojourn in Moscow. In his book he wrote a whole chapter about Krumina, calling her 'the woman of steel'. At this time, many foreign journalists were swarming over Moscow, some for excitement, some in sincere interest. Both Krumina and Malygina were the dedicated ones; it was not until later that I was able to see the human beings behind the revolutionary shield.

AT the Delovoy Dvor I met many eminent comrades from abroad. Jacques Sadoul, the Frenchman who came with the French military mission to Russia, witnessed the October Revolution and went over to the Bolsheviks, was among them. There was Roy, the tall, handsome Indian; John Reed, the boisterous American journalist, and his wife, Louise; Eugene Varga, the economist from Budapest; the Bulgarian Shablin, who refused to eat eggs or drink milk because he would be depriving Russian children.

Occasionally some of us had to do work which was not connected directly with our particular job. It was a practice to take foreign delegates to Red Army barracks, hospitals, and factories to speak to the soldiers and workers, expressing the solidarity of their union or party and promising to do their utmost to promote revolution in their own countries. At such meetings I was sometimes used as an interpreter.

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Once at such a meeting at a barracks near Moscow, I was given an interpreting assignment. Tomsky, chairman of the Russian trade unions, was presiding. I was sitting at the speaker's table waiting to translate for a German trade unionist. Among the other speakers was a Swiss woman who spoke in a French dialect I could scarcely understand. I could distinguish only words like 'cradle', 'east', 'sun'. Suddenly, to my utter amazement, Tomsky leaned towards me and said, 'You will interpret her speech; the French interpreter hasn't turned up'. I assured him that I understood not a word. Nevertheless, he introduced me as the interpreter of the woman's speech.

By this time, I had listened to many foreigners, and I knew the general trend of their speeches. On the basis of the few words I understood, I made up my own speech. 'Russia is the cradle of the Revolution. . . . The sun rises in the East. . . .' and on and on. . . .

One morning a slender, ascetic looking young man whose pallor was intensified by a red Vandyck beard stepped into the office waving a manuscript. As he handed it to me he said something in English. I smiled and shook my head. He then tried German, addressing me with the familiar *Du* instead of *Sie*. I took the paper from him, and saw that it was signed 'Fraina'.

So this was Fraina! I had heard about him. At that time there were two rival communist parties in the United States. The Communist Labor Party of America which was represented by its international delegate John Reed, and the United Labor Party which was represented by its international secretary, Louis C. Fraina. Reed had left for Russia in September 1919. Fraina was held up in New York for two more months disposing of the 'spy' charges against him. A party trial was held and the charges were dismissed.

The charges reached Moscow ahead of Fraina. The Comintern appointed a committee of three to look into them—an American, Alexander Bilan, a Frenchman, Alfred Rosmer, and a Hungarian, Rudniansky. They studied the evidence from New York, listened to more testimony by all Americans present in Moscow, including Fraina himself. The committee agreed unanimously on Fraina's complete innocence, and he was admitted to the sessions of the congress.

During the congress Fraina's accuser, Santeri Nuorteva, arrived in Moscow. Fraina, in view of Nuorteva's presence, requested the Comintern to reopen the whole case. After listening to Nuorteva at length, the investigating committee gave Fraina a clean bill of health for the third time.

Subsequently, on 29 September 1920, at Lenin's suggestion, the following supplementary resolution was adopted: 'The Executive Committee of the Communist International insists that Nuorteva must retract publicly, in the press, all the accusations made by him against Comrade Fraina'.

When Fraina handed me his manuscript, I counted the words, noting gratefully that this young man in the Russian blouse had taken the

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trouble to type the paper neatly, and returned the manuscript to him, asking him in German to cut it by so many words. He nodded. I inquired where he was staying.

'Delovoy Dvor', he said. I had not noticed him among the hundreds of foreigners in the hotel. When I told him that I was staying there too, he volunteered to bring the manuscript to my room.

That evening after dinner as I was chatting in my room with Herta, secretary to the German communist dowager, Clara Zetkin, there was a knock at the door. 'Mozhno!' I called, and in walked Fraina. He gave me the revised copy of his speech and sat down and began to talk, employing Herta as interpreter. Herta's English was as fluent as her native German, and we soon had a lively discussion going. I began to like this forthright young man. Unlike so many of the self-important delegates to the congress, he had a fresh, challenging manner, and even gave evidence of having a sense of humour. Somehow the conversation turned to literature, and I was amazed at my visitor's broad acquaintance with the great Russian writers.

It was well into the small hours of the morning, and we were still reciting poetry, Fraina from Frost and Whitman in English, and I from Heine in German and Pushkin in Russian. Herta, clutching her throat, said she couldn't go on. We had exhausted our interpreter.

The next morning, as I was preparing to go down to breakfast, I heard someone whistling an unfamiliar tune in the corridor outside my room. The tune had a catchy lilt to it, and I listened with pleasure. Opening the door, I discovered Fraina serenading me. He had gone to the dining-room, and, not finding me there, had decided to come up and whistle *Beautiful Ohio* to let me know he was waiting. From that time until our marriage, he serenaded me every morning before breakfast and at supper time. Later he added *Till We Meet Again* to his repertoire.

Although we could scarcely communicate with words, we began to go walking together, to visit museums and theatres; we employed an improvised language, a polyglot of German, English, Italian, and French. I don't think anyone else in the world could have understood us.

FRAINA and I knew that since he was a professional revolutionist, he would be required to go wherever the Comintern Executive found it advisable to send him. When, after a short three weeks' courtship, we became man and wife, we were very much like a soldier and his war-bride.

On the morning after our marriage Fraina appeared at the office and motioned me to step out into the hall. There stood a tall, dark-haired man—a lion of a man he seemed to me, with his black moustache and large white teeth—whom Fraina introduced as Borodin. As he shook my hand, Borodin's great brown eyes stared piercingly into my own. Then he said in Russian, 'Let's have a look at you', and spun me around. Apparently I passed the test, for he called after me as I walked back towards the office, 'I think we shall be friends'.

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Later, back in our hotel room, my husband explained the encounter in our polyglot language. He and Borodin had become friends a year earlier when they had met in Amsterdam. That very morning Fraina had run into Borodin and told him he had married a Russian girl. To this Borodin exploded, 'You fool!' He insisted on seeing me at once.

'Does he still think you are a fool?' I asked.

'Worse, he thinks I married the Rock of Gibraltar.'

Fraina and I fell into a routine. In the morning I went to the Comintern office, waiting for the evening to go back to him. He used to write and read all day, waiting for me to come home.

There was a certain insecure security in our life in Moscow, with the Civil War, and some last flickers of the World War still flaring up here and there. We got better acquainted with the comrades living in the hotel. I was living in hope that my husband would not be sent away. I knew that I would always find Fraina waiting for me. One evening I opened the door quietly, expecting the usual, 'Fraina left, he does not live here any more'. There was not a sound. I entered the room and found him lying on the bed reading a book. He wore a quiet smile. His beard was shaved; he looked much younger, and he had a different expression. He told me that he had got his new assignment and would have to leave soon. And, what was more important, he had had an interview with Lenin in the afternoon. Lenin had sent his car for him, and he had gone to the Kremlin. After I was assured that he would not leave immediately, I wanted to know all about the interview. It is hard to describe the psychological power Lenin's personality had over us.

Fraina had been appointed to a three-man All-America Bureau of the Communist International which was to work in Mexico. (It was at this interview that Lenin suggested that the man who had made the charge against Fraina be called upon to retract it in writing.) Lenin asked Fraina whether he was interested in philosophy. 'Not particularly,' Fraina answered. 'And the communists in America?' Lenin asked. 'Still less,' was Fraina's reply. At this Lenin shook his head regretfully: 'Our movement should study more philosophy.'

When Borodin returned to Moscow he and Fraina got ready to leave for Berlin, where further arrangements were to be made for Fraina's departure to Mexico. We all looked upon it as a temporary departure. His return to Moscow was taken as a matter of course; certainly he would return for the next congress. He began to whistle a new song, *Till We Meet Again.*

The day Fraina was to depart, I went to the office as usual. When I came back and did not find him, I went to see Mirov, who was in charge of making travel arrangements for illegal comrades. In his usual sarcastic tone, he said, 'Fraina is not of the stuff a revolutionary should be made of. He is too cautious and is too much concerned about you.' I asked for an explanation. Fraina had refused to travel on an American passport and worried about how I could join him. (Mirov soon became a good friend; he stopped being an enigma to me. The

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man had spent his youth in Tsarist jails and now was lonely and dedicated to the revolution; he found it difficult to forgive 'human weaknesses' in others.)

Borodin, who practically commuted between Berlin and Moscow, brought me the first message from Fraina. It was loving and cheerful, but soon I was getting letters which sounded less and less cheerful. And then came a letter which I did not show Mirov. 'It is a long time to wait, but what must be done must be done. . . . At this time I am not interested in anything. My main feeling is longing for you. . . .' Fraina was getting ready to leave Berlin. He got as far as Italy where he fell sick and returned to Berlin. From there he wrote a letter to Lenin with a copy to Bukharin. In it he wrote that it was a mistake to leave his wife in Moscow. He asked Lenin to give me permission to leave Moscow at once. Lenin personally telephoned my boss, Axelrod, and gave instructions to release me.

I arrived in Berlin late in the evening and stayed at an hotel. I did not know my husband's address. The next day I went to the Russian Embassy to inquire. I found that Fraina lived in a pension run by a German woman who kept the pension specifically for illegal comrades. She had lived for a number of years in the States and spoke poor but fluent English. She never knew her guests' names; she was not told. She named them as best she could. Borodin she named 'Der grosse Herr', Fraina 'the Little Bit'. She finally figured out for whom I was looking.

When I entered the room, Fraina was in bed with a packing on his neck, unshaved. Borodin was examining various bottles to determine what medicine he would give Fraina next. The room was small and full of smoke.

Neither of them had known that I was coming. I was pretty much at home in Germany, and I asked the landlady for a larger and more airy room, and she gave us one with a balcony. I called in a barber to shave Fraina and removed the packing from his neck. He felt so much better that he insisted on getting dressed, and the three of us went to Drexel's Restaurant on Unter den Linden. Fraina was so happy that Borodin told him: 'You were not sick, you were lovesick,' and then added with contempt; 'You poor fish.' I had never heard that expression before and it sounded funny to me. I started to call Fraina 'Poor Fisch', to Borodin's amusement. 'For God's sake,' Fraina protested, 'at least drop the "poor".' From then on I called him Fisch, and he called me the same. Borodin called us the 'happy aquarium'.

After that evening the name Fish remained with us and later proved convenient when we travelled and lived illegally. Once a friend of mine from the earlier days in Germany, the actor Fritz Odemar, sent us two tickets for the Frankfurter Schauspielhaus to see him in the role of St. Just and join him and some friends after the theatre in the Frankfurter Hof. When we got there the party was going on. Among the guests I recognised Max and Freda Brod and a number of actors

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and playwrights. Odemar knew about our illegality. For a moment he hesitated and then introduced us: 'Herr und Frau Fisch'.

BEFORE going to Mexico Fraina was to go to New York to promote unity, which was resented by the communist factions which were to be united. He returned from New York discouraged. When he spoke about this to Borodin, describing the 'power politics and intrigues galore', he added that he was glad to be going to Mexico. Borodin's answer was: 'And what do you think you will find there?' When I once asked Borodin why he had left the United States, he smiled and said, 'Because the train in the morning used to leave at 8.01' (from the suburb where he lived to Chicago where he ran a school).

In Berlin we were getting ready to leave for Mexico. Borodin took us to lunch. There he noticed that I had no wedding ring. He insisted that I had to wear a wedding ring on the ship. We all went to a jewellery shop. While Borodin was looking at the wedding rings, Fraina looked at Spanish ear-rings, 'these are much more interesting', and he bought them. Borodin bought the wedding ring.

In Mexico City we landed in an hotel recommended by the Mexican comrade who met us. There were bands playing all night and neon lights glaring into our room. I must admit that my spirits were low. The next day I went to look for a place to live. I found a tiny house over a garage, formerly the servants' quarters, in the middle of a beautiful garden. Fraina reluctantly brought the trunks there. I did not know Spanish nor did I know how to cook, but I was determined to learn both. Eventually Fraina learned to love our little house and even my cooking. He recalled what Bukharin had said about me when we got married: 'She will not drag him down.' 'Maybe this is what Bukharin meant; so you did drag me down,' he said, but he was rather pleased with it all.

The Latin-American bureau consisted of Fraina, Katayama, a kind old Japanese revolutionist who lived in the United States, a young American with a dark complexion, who spoke Spanish and to whom the Comintern gave the name of Ramirez. A young Mexican served as a go-between between the bureau and the Mexican communists. An American student who was the wife of a Japanese student served as secretary to Katayama. She was my only companion, and we used to explore the countryside. I often felt more like an exile than a missionary's wife.

After six months we left Mexico, Fraina for the United States, and I for Germany. In the States Fraina was given a new assignment in South America. I was to remain in Germany.

BERLIN had changed in the six months I had been away. So had the Russian Embassy. It looked more respectable, and at the same time it was more daring. Conversations were held about 'deviations', deviations from the official communist line, from trade union policy.

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Mirov was now employed there. I asked for Borodin, but he was out of town.

I made the rounds to visit my friends. Erna Morena, the film actress, was bitter because her husband, Wilhelm Herzog, had been fired from the editorship of the *Rote Fahne*, the Communist Party newspaper. He was still editor of *Forum*, the leftish literary magazine. Next I heard about Paul Franken, the husband of a friend from earlier days, Flora, and a Steel Workers' Union official who went with three other union representatives to Moscow to protest against the 'disastrous trade union policy', and got no satisfaction. Clara Zetkin had pleaded with Lenin on their behalf. Lenin's answer was: 'Let them go into retreat and study Marx, as the Bolsheviks did.' Paul Levi, the German communist leader, scholar, and esthete ('music is like fine china') was out. Old friends, not realising that I was out of touch with politics, showered me with questions that I could not answer. 'What do you think about the Kronstadt affair? *They* were the people who made the revolution, *they* demanded free elections to the Soviets.' Some of my friends were in disgrace, but we were still in touch with each other. Ostracism had not yet become an accepted policy.

I called at the Russian Embassy to ask whether they had a job for me. They sent me to the Russian-German Railroad Commission. The Commission was headed by the famous Russian railroad engineer, Lomonosov, who turned over his fortune to the Bolsheviks when they took power. The staff of the Commission was a mixed one. There were some communists, some old-time engineers who either cooperated with the Bolsheviks or simply wanted to work in Europe. There were also many Germans who had been expelled from Russia in 1914. (Some of them did not know that they were Germans until this happened.) I was set to work translating catalogues, and also teaching Russian to German engineers who were planning to go to Russia.

I had a call from the Russian Embassy—they had a surprise for me. I was sure it must be Fraina, but it was Borodin. I certainly was glad to see him. I was told that he had arrived from Britain. (One never asked such questions.) I spent much of my free time with him and the Roys.

Some members of the delegation to the Genoa Conference arrived in Berlin. Among them was Sapronov. I had not seen him since the Moscow days. He was the most Russian of all the Russians I have known. He was the son of a peasant and liked to show the mark of a pig's bite on his hand—the whole family, animals included, had lived in a hut. When he grew up he had become a house painter. In 1905 he was imprisoned and exiled, and after the Bolshevik revolution became prominent in the new revolutionary government. He had the appearance of a Russian peasant, short, stocky, with a bushy head of hair. He was the most outspoken critic of the growing bureaucracy in Russia. He had asserted at one meeting that 'the dictatorship of the proletariat leads to the dictatorship of the bureaucracy in the party'.

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I heard that he had once asked Lenin whether he believed that the salvation of the revolution lies in mechanical obedience. I asked Sapronov whether it was true. 'Yes, it is true,' he said. He also told me of a meeting at which Kollontai was proposed for some work. Lenin said: 'You will have to see that there is no sailor around, or she may run off with him.' Sapronov then got up and objected to remarks of this kind about a comrade, and Lenin apologised.

Sapronov was one of the few workers who came to the top in the Bolshevik government. He was both a tough revolutionary and a gentle soul. Once he came to lunch with me and some of my co-workers. It was our custom to pay for ourselves. When I gave him money for my lunch, he shoved it aside and said, 'Take the dirty money.' 'It is not dirty,' I objected. 'I work for it.' He then took out a lot of German notes and said: 'They gave it to me, but I don't know what to do with it.'

He stayed in Berlin over the weekend. I wanted to show him around the city, but all he wanted to do was to go boating on the lake. There he seemed to relax. 'Why don't you come back to Russia? What do you want to go to foreign countries for?' he asked. 'I would like to visit Russia,' I replied, 'but I have no papers.' 'You don't need any papers if you go with me. Who is going to stop me?' Then he complained that the comrades were becoming bourgeois since the NEP (New Economic Policy). 'You come to a responsible worker, and there he sits leisurely with his wife in front of the samovar and drinks tea.' 'There is nothing wrong in his drinking tea with his wife; it is time they relaxed and became human,' I replied.

The next day I was to call for him at his hotel. He rushed down and asked me to come up. He had bought a German book and wanted me to see it. When I entered the room, the table was set, a teapot with hot tea on the table, and cake. It was to be a surprise, but I could not restrain myself from teasing him. 'Our comrades are getting too bourgeois,' I said. 'They sit and drink tea.' He smiled like a child. He showed me the book he had bought. It was a Russian-German dictionary. 'How did you learn German?' he asked. 'I learned it in school, like you learned Russian, then I lived in Germany.' 'But you knew Russian before you went to school,' he replied. 'Did you use this kind of book?' 'Yes,' I told him, 'to look up words. I still use one occasionally.' 'Show me how to use it,' he said. I explained that he would have to learn how to read German first. He was disappointed.

When he returned to Moscow, he wrote to me: 'In the train opposite me sat Vandervelde. He looked at me just as if I were a monkey who had run away from the Zoo.' I followed Sapronov's career. He continued to be in the forefront of the fight against dictatorship and bureaucracy. He was fearless in his accusations, and when all the oppositionists of his group later recanted, including Krupskaya, Lenin's widow, Sapronov openly demanded the reestablishment of the Soviets, criticised the GPU for 'suppressing the discontent of the workers', accused the Red Army of 'becoming the instrument of Bonapartist adventurism'. In 1928 there

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was a short notice in the press: 'Sapronov has been banished from Moscow.'

I ONCE said to Borodin: 'Whenever I introduce you to someone. they always say, "There is a great man".' 'Yes,' he answered, 'and vanity makes me try to live up to it. Perhaps that is the tragedy of my life.'

Vincent Sheean said of him: 'He seemed to take the "long view" by nature, by an almost superiority of vision . . . a clear, calm view of life . . . a quality of being in but above the battle. . . .'

Randall Gould described him: 'A large quiet man whose white Russian blouse and drooping moustache somehow assist materially in conveying an impression of force, poise and earnestness.'

One day, when I met Borodin and Roy. Borodin said: 'I am leaving tomorrow for Asia. You want to come along? I need people to work with me.' 'No,' I replied, 'I am going to have a baby. Lou is going to meet me in Frankfurt; he has left his assignment.'

We walked in silence. 'I don't know what will happen now,' I added. Spacing his words, he said: 'Life will go on just the same. You will take a little apartment in Manhattan. Lou will get a job on the *New York Times*; he is an able writer.' Later, Lou did work for the *New York Times*, not as a writer, but as a proofreader. One night he proof-read the news about Lenin's death. He awakened me when he got home, and we recalled Lenin's discussion on philosophy while war was raging at Warsaw, and his concern for us. And it was in the *New York Times* that we read that Borodin had died in a Soviet concentration camp.

Fraina and I met in Frankfurt. Mama Auchter insisted that we stay a few weeks with them, and make up our minds what we were to do. Fraina had some money left. We would have to use it until we got on out feet. We decided it would be better not to go to the United States (it was right after the Palmer raids). Then I thought of Mexico, of our first little home. Perhaps we could settle there, find jobs. We would be a plain normal family.

I was very hopeful, and felt full of ambition about starting a new life. But when we were on the train, on the way to the ship, Fraina cried. I then realised that he was not so optimistic as I was, and I felt guilty that by insisting on having a baby, I had made him face responsibilities for which he was not ready.

We arrived in Mexico shortly before the baby was born. She had flaxen hair and big blue eyes. At this moment we forgot everything else, and were happy. We were now a family.

IN 1957 the Soviet Union celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution. The magazines were full of reminiscences and articles. A prominent place was given to Lenin. *Innostrannaya Literatura*, a publication of the Union of Soviet Writers, published an article on 'Lenin and Foreign Writers' (No. 11, 1957). In a long

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introduction the editors said that 'the article shows how Lenin helped foreign writers to become acquainted with the activities of the Communist Party and the Soviet State'. They also published a number of documents, including facsimiles of notes by Lenin (1919–21), taken from the archives of the Marxism-Leninism Institute.

Of the American writers the notes are concerned with John Reed, Louise Bryant, and Bessie Beatty, a newspaperwoman. They really throw more light on Lenin than on the writers. (See *The Antioch Review*, Winter 1958, pp. 510–515.) The more elaborate notes are concerned with Louis Fraina. When Fraina came as an American delegate to the second congress of the Comintern he brought with him *The Proletarian Revolution in Russia*, a collection of articles including some by Lenin and Trotsky.

Because these articles were their first appearance in English translation, Lenin was much impressed. He believed that more Soviet writing should be translated into English and suggested that Fraina select the material. In evidence is the following document:

> RSFSR Chairman of the Council of Labour and Defence Moscow, Kremlin, 17. VIII. 1920
> To all People's Commissars and Members of Boards!
> For Comrade Louis Fraina, who is remaining in Moscow for some time and who is the author of extremely useful literary works (about bolshevism, history and tactics) in the English language, it is necessary to find a few comrades to work regularly with him translating from Russian into English. They need not be party members. I request that a search be made for suitable translators who know the English language perfectly; report to our Secretariat.
> Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars
> (signed) V. Ulyanov (Lenin)

Instructions to the secretaries followed this document. The curt language and the script's underscorings indicate Lenin's impatience and irritation that his order was not carried out.

> Secretary Glasser to Lenin:
> Vladimir Ilyich:
> Axelrod has a good translator from English, Moiseyev. Besides the translator Wachs (also from English) [1]

Then from Lenin, three notes to his secretaries:

> (1) Collect all suitable translators and *assign* (double underline) them for every day and *hour* (underline) to Fraina to work *with him* (double underline).
> (2) NB. Find a translator for Fraina (English). Keep at it and inform me.
> (3) I did not undertake to supply Fraina with stenographers and

[1] At that very time I was working in the office with Axelrod and Moiseyev, and saw Wachs frequently. I was then married to Louis Fraina, which was known in the office. At no time did I hear, nor was I told that Lenin was looking for a translator for Fraina.

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> don't intend to. He needs translators (in spite of those who misinformed you—he needs them to *acquaint* (double underline) him with *Russian literature* (double underline). I insist upon it. I beg you not to believe Axelrod at all, but *check* (triple underline) in my name the schedules of translators by *the hour* (triple underline).

Drawing upon my own resources of information, I know that Fraina discussed with Lenin Daniel DeLeon's *Two Pages from Roman History* published in New York in 1915. Lenin became interested in the book and wrote to Bukharin:

> Comrade Bukharin:
>
> In my opinion *The Two Pages from Roman History* by DeLeon must be issued in Russian with a preface and commentaries by Fraina. I, too, will write a few words. If you agree, give orders to the State Publishing House. If not, we will talk about it.

This letter appears in *Innostrannaya Literatura* without Bukharin's name. But his name was attached to it when it was first printed in *Zhizn* (No. 1, 1924). It was not reproduced in the early editions of *Lenin's Correspondence and Notes,* but appeared subsequently in one of the five additional volumes issued in 1957 (4th ed., vol. 36, p. 486). The State Publishing House did not carry out the order.

The editors then devote a whole page to Fraina. They observe that 'Lenin was apparently acquainted with Fraina's articles in the *Revolutionary Age* and his large work *Revolutionary Socialism*'. They quote approvingly from Fraina's speeches at the second congress of the Comintern when, 'in the presence of Vladimir Ilyich, he sharply opposed Zinoviev and Radek, and later the Dutch and German "leftists".' They refer for further information to issues of *The Communist International.* From their final reference to Fraina I quote:

> The weekly paper of the Propaganda League, *The Revolutionary Age,* was published in Boston under the editorship of Comrade Fraina, who was a Marxist and remained true to the Marxist point of view till the end in that time of unrest. . . . After 1920 Fraina did not actively participate in the party press.

Louis Fraina left the Communist Party in 1922. There is no indication in the above account that Fraina wrote on social and economic problems under the name of Lewis Corey or that in later years he became an active anti-communist writer. Even Lenin is not safe from distortion.

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# FROM MEXICO TO MOSCOW, II

*Manuel Gomez*

*We publish below the second part of the interview recently given by Manuel Gomez to Theodore Draper in New York. Gomez had returned to Mexico from Moscow, where he attended the second congress of the Communist International.*

**Q.** Did you find many changes when you got back?

**A.** Yes, everything had changed. I'd been away about a year. In that time the Socialist Party had become a completely different party; all the original members were gone; it was now called the Communist Party, and it was larger. I had sent reports regularly from the congress and they knew I was coming back. They didn't know about my mission. I was greeted by Bob Haberman when I arrived in Mexico who arranged a big dinner for me, at which Felipe Carrillo was present; it was in Diego Rivera's house, and it was very sumptuous.

**Q.** Did Rivera consider himself a communist at that time?

**A.** No. But he was sympathetic to Russia. Who wasn't? I mean among people who had broad working-class sympathies. That was the first time I met Diego Rivera—and Gupta was at that dinner too, I remember now. I remember he had very bitter things to say about Roy. Well, anyway, when Fraina arrived we discussed what we should do, and we decided that Katayama should, with my help, organise a nucleus in Mexico, and publish a newspaper, and that Fraina should go to South America, but I do not remember whether he made the trip. I did organise a group; the central figure was a man by the name of Jose C. Valdes who was at the same time the leading figure of the reconstituted communist party from the youth movement. He was very young; later he became quite a figure in Mexico. But we did organise a group, and it was rather open. We got out a newspaper—*El Trabajador*, which I edited.

**Q.** A weekly, was it—or a monthly?

**A.** A weekly, this was. Long tabloid form, like the *New Statesman* in size. We formed a labour organisation called the Confederation General de Trabajadores—to oppose the CROM. This was part of the dual union policy—this was affiliated to the Profintern. And it was not a paper organisation either. We had local unions of all kinds—painters unions, hod carriers unions, all kinds.

**Q.** Who was the head of it, do you recall? It must have been a Mexican.

**A.** Oh, sure, it was a Mexican. But I don't remember—it was not Valdes, because Valdes was an intellectual.

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**Q.** The organisation and the paper were both started in 1921?

**A.** Yes, we had union headquarters—open headquarters of the CGT. In fact, the CROM was worried about it, because we were growing pretty rapidly. I spoke at a May Day meeting to tremendous crowds of people in front of the Juarez statue at the Alameda—huge crowds of people. But after a few months I was arrested, taken to prison, because I spoke at the May Day meeting. I was held incommunicado with a Spaniard, who was also active; he was one of those that I recruited who was active in the movement—a member of the CGT—on its executive committee. He was a firebrand of a Spaniard, and he and I were in prison in Mexico City—incommunicado—because foreigners were not supposed to take part in Mexican politics.

**Q.** You were still using the name Jesus Ramirez?

**A.** No. The name that I had been known by in Mexico was Frank. We were arrested—and then after a few days in prison in Mexico City, we were hustled off to Carretero, and we were in prison in Carretero for quite a while.

We were to be deported to the United States. However, a delegation of the CGT had gotten wind of this through my wife, and they went to Obregon who was president at the time, and protested against my being sent to the United States—and I wasn't. San Vicente and I were shipped to Manzanillo, and from there we were deported to Guatemala. We were in Guatemala for about a month, during which time, largely through the efforts of San Vicente, who was really quite able in this way, we made contact with something like a Guatemalan movement; it was there, in Guatemala, that I got the name of Manuel Gomez.

**Q.** Are we still in 1921?

**A.** Yes, still in 1921. With papers under the name of Manuel Gomez my wife and I went back to Mexico secretly. We found our way to Mexico City, and established contact with the group through Valdes—but from then on open activity ceased. I could not function, because I was not supposed to be in Mexico.

**Q.** You mean, *your* open activity.

**A.** *My* open activity ceased. So I had contact only with one or two individuals, but I did edit the paper—they would bring me the proof sheets.

**Q.** Was Katayama still there?

**A.** Katayama might have been there—I don't know when he left. I don't know what happened to him. Nor did the others. He had disappeared from the house where we had been together. Well, I had to live very carefully. In fact, I would only go out at night, and walk just to get some exercise. Even then, however, through people who came to see me, the government got close enough to me to make me move quickly. And for a while I was moving every week. Till finally it

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became plain to me that I could do no effective work on this basis. So I left.

Katayama wasn't present, Fraina wasn't there. There was nobody I could consult. I had to act on my own responsibility, and just leave things in the hands of the CGT executive, which was by then quite a respectable organisation. In fact, it is still a very sizable organisation, almost as large as the CROM.

So then I left Mexico—communicated with the Profintern—and received word that my mission could be considered at an end. So I returned to the United States, and went to Chicago, and joined the American party, just as an individual. I got a transfer from the Mexican party. I really joined the Workers' Party, because that was the only legal party.

**Q.** In effect, as far as you know, the Mexicans did not send a delegate to the founding Profintern Congress in 1921?

**A.** I believe not. I joined the Workers' Party, and then from there I was recruited into the Communist Party immediately, but very quickly after that the Communist Party was dissolved, and decided to go legal and do away with the underground. I became very active on a local basis, and I was elected to the city central committee in Chicago. First, I was chairman of my branch. It was before we called them nuclei and all that kind of business. It was a North Side branch, I remember. Jack Carney had been president before me. Then I was elected to the district committee. And then to the national convention. But when the Foster-Cannon group, to which I belonged, got control of the party, I was put in charge of the anti-imperialist activities because I knew Spanish and because of my experience in Mexico. I got to know a great many Mexicans, Chinese and Filipinos; I also met some Cubans. The only Cuban leader whom I ever really knew was Mella, whom I met at the Brussels anti-imperialist congress, in 1927. I also met Haya de la Torre there, and Nehru. Nehru reminded me very much of the Roy I had first met, except that he was more of an intellectual than Roy—more of a dispassionate intellectual. Roy was a more passionate figure.

**Q.** The next time you came to a Comintern congress was the sixth, in 1928?

**A.** Yes. I had been elected to the Central Committee of the party and I was elected as a delegate to the sixth congress. For the Brussels Congress, a group of us went on a speaking tour, which was organised, operated by Willy Münzenberg, with his factotum at that time, a fellow by the name of Louis Gibarti. We were like a travelling circus. A group of us delegates went from city to city making speeches.

**Q.** In Europe?

**A.** In Europe. And while I was in Europe, I received credentials to represent the American party as a fraternal delegate to the congress of

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the German party at Essen. I went to Essen and I spoke there as a fraternal delegate of the American party.

**Q.** It would be interesting to get your impressions of what had happened between the second and the sixth Comintern congresses. The sixth, after all, was a very large affair. And the second was the first real one. Could you express what had happened between the second and the sixth in terms of the organisation?

**A.** Yes. I've told you what I thought were the real issues of the second congress. I would say that the one real issue of the sixth congress was Trotskyism, and anything that could be labelled Trotskyism.

There was a tremendous difference, of course. The second congress was more an organisation congress than really a congress; it really established all the theory and philosophy for the communist movement. The sixth congress really, of course, was a congress of big real parties, some of them quite powerful. But even so the fact of Russian domination remained. It was omnipresent. In fact, the various parties were doing what they never would have done at the second congress, in that they recognised their relationship to the Russian party, and were speculating on where the power was in the Russian party, and how they could tie their own local factional fights to the power centre in Russia, because they knew that otherwise they would lose. No matter how strong their position might be at home, no matter how popular the individual local leaders might be, they knew that they had no chance if the Russian party was against them. So this fact of currying favour with whoever might be considered to be the real power in Russia was the most striking thing to me of the sixth congress. No one at the second congress would have thought of saying ' the glorious Russian Communist Party, under the leadership of Lenin '—but at the sixth congress no one would have thought of talking of the glorious Soviet Party without adding ' under the leadership of Stalin '. There were certain things that had to be said, the absence of which was grounds for suspicion. And there was, of course, as you know, a struggle in so far as the American party is concerned (but it wasn't only the American party), there was the Lovestone group, speculating on Bukharin's triumph, and our group, speculating on Stalin's triumph.

**Q.** Were you aware at the sixth congress of the weakness of Bukharin's position? Nominally, he opened the congress as leader of the Comintern, but during the congress there were noticeable signs that he was in danger. Did you get any sense of this, or was it still obscure to most delegates?

**A.** It was obscure. It seemed to us that Stalin was going to win, but it seemed to the Lovestoneites that Bukharin was going to win. It was not clear-cut—no. *Before* the congress it was not clear-cut, but it began to be indicated during the congress, I would say. Yes.

**Q.** Perhaps I could put the question this way. In the struggle against Zinoviev, Stalin and Bukharin had an alliance. At the sixth congress,

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it became clear that this alliance was breaking, and that Stalin was threatening Bukharin. Do you recall whether you had a sense of this happening, and what brought it on? What made it clear?

**A.** Oh, yes. The fact that we were taking sides. We were taking sides. I went with Bittelman to see Molotov.

**Q.** What were the circumstances?

**A.** Well, I was there by accident. Bittelman and Dunne sought an interview with Stalin. They did that on the basis of a caucus of our group among the American delegation. I mean the Foster-Cannon group. They named Bittelman and Dunne to have an interview with Stalin to present the case for our faction in the American party. Stalin was so busy that he couldn't see us then, and they got an appointment with Molotov. When the time for the appointment came, Bill Dunne was nowhere to be seen. And it was thought inadvisable for only one person to go, because in these things you always need at least two people. So it was decided that I should go with Bittelman to see Molotov, with Bittelman as the spokesman. We talked at great length—Molotov couldn't speak one word of English, so everything was through an interpreter, except when Bittelman talked, and *I* couldn't understand. Bittelman could talk Russian. However, I had a few questions, a few things to say also. Because I didn't agree with Bittelman on many points.

**Q.** Were you closer to Cannon than to Foster? You were closer to Cannon and Dunne.

**A.** That's right. I was really there as Dunne's alternate. I did not see eye to eye with Bittelman. Already there was quite a split. We were an alliance, rather than a solid group—the Foster-Cannon group. But our point was that the Lovestone group represented an opportunist group, basing itself on something that we called 'American exceptionalism'. Molotov said 'Yes, Yes' and so on, he was interested to know where we stood, and, of course, we didn't even wait for him to ask many questions because we were ahead of him. We were there for one purpose, and he knew we were there for one purpose, otherwise we wouldn't be there at all; we would have had an interview with Bukharin. He knew not only that we were there, but he also knew that Lovestone was talking to Bukharin. So the thing was all cut and dried anyway. We didn't even need a conference. We got complete support for our side.

**Q.** You mean, Bittelman talked about the Bukharin line—he dissociated your faction from the Bukharin line. Did Bukharin's name actually come up in the conversation?

**A.** Yes, but Molotov did not comment on that—did not comment on that at all. But when we left, there were very strong handshakes, and a remark on the part of Molotov that he was glad to see that there was such a staunch group within the American party, and that there was such fine leadership there.

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**Q.** You felt you hadn't wasted your time?

**A.** Well, we may have wasted our time in the sense that the interview was not necessary. But we certainly were confident that we were going to be supported, if we were right that Stalin would win out in the Russian party. The whole thing was a speculation on who would win in the Russian party.

**Q.** Now, during the sixth congress, as you know, Cannon found this famous draft of Trotsky's on his desk, and this changed his life. Evidently he didn't talk to you about it.

**A.** Oh, yes.

**Q.** You did know about that?

**A.** Not then. Next to Borodin, the most devious person I know is Cannon. Cannon talked at great length about it in Moscow—without talking about it—talked a great deal about Trotsky, without supporting Trotsky and without opposing Stalin—but he raised questions in a very ambiguous way that made one ask oneself: Why is he talking like that, anyway? There's something peculiar going on here. And yet it never went further than that.

**Q.** He never showed you the document, or anything like that?

**A.** Not then, no.

**Q.** May I go back a minute. Am I clear that you're saying he never declared for Trotsky?

**A.** Not at that time.

**Q.** Am I clear that your group was banking on Stalin's victory, and the others on Bukharin's victory, regardless of the ideological stand you had?

**A.** Well, we rationalised it. I'm only trying to give you now the bare bones, using a scalpel, and cutting away the rotten tissue. I can say to you now that that was it. But we rationalised it, of course, in terms of the Russian contest.

**Q.** Supporting the probable leadership, the probable victor, rather than your basic ideological belief in Stalin—

**A.** You mean, apart from all rationalisation? Absolutely. Certainly. And the struggle for power in the American party.

**Q.** It would also mean that at the sixth congress you were not sure that Stalin was already the real power.

**A.** Well, we felt it was pretty sure. We were not 100 per cent sure, but we felt fairly confident.

**Q.** And this was true even in the Cannon group? Because, after all, there were substantial differences between these two groups (Foster and Cannon).

**A.** Yes, this was true, *especially* in the Cannon group. I was much closer to the Cannon group than the Foster group. Though of course

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I was close to the Foster group from the past—I had been very close to Foster. But there was very little doubt among the Cannon group as to who would win in the Russian party.

**Q.** Do you recall anything about what Lovestone has called the 'corridor congress' at the sixth congress? There was this business of walking up and down the corridors with Stalin's people, talking about Bukharin, and winning people over.

**A.** Yes, I would say that the Molotov conference was in that category. The other side was doing the same thing.

**Q.** Is there anything else that stands out in your mind about the sixth congress? Anything of special interest or importance? Did you get to know Bukharin at all? Have you some impressions of him?

**A.** Yes, I was very fond of him. He was very nimble, graceful, with a delightful sense of humour, quite sophisticated, and fond of sophisticated expressions and formulations. He had had his fights with Lenin, of course, and his differences. But I had a real personal liking for Bukharin, and respect for him. I must say that the respect was largely something taken in at second hand, because Lenin called him the 'theoretician of the party', and so on, 'the darling of the party'. I don't recall any important writings of Bukharin that stand out in my mind, the way writings of Lenin and Trotsky do. But the impact of his personality was decidedly favourable.

**Q.** Did you meet Stalin at all?

**A.** No, I never met him. I saw him at a distance.

**Q.** What about Zinoviev?

**A.** I did not like Zinoviev. He had a very peculiar, squeaky, high-pitched voice, a funny way of speaking. Of course, I was prejudiced against him because he had opposed the Revolution. Actually, I never felt that he and Kamenev were anything for Lenin but convenient figures. They did not seem to be people of stature the way Trotsky seemed to be, and Bukharin. However, they must have had some stature. Zinoviev spoke rarely, except in German—and I did not listen very much to the German, although I could understand it fairly well—I did not see him much at all, though I *heard* him, *ad nauseam.*

**Q.** In your notes—if my memory holds out—you wanted to say something about Russian purse-strings, or something of the sort; that was limited to the early period?

**A.** Well, what I had down there was limited to the early period, but I should not have limited it to that. That brings up two questions, not necessarily related: one of them is the question of purse-strings, and the other is the question of Comintern representatives. Reps. we called them. This also is related to the general Russification and Russian control. Comintern reps. began to exist everywhere, and even Comintern lingo—Russian lingo—words like nuclei and politburo—and we had a plenum

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in the American party, and all this kind of business—every country had a Comintern rep.

**Q.** How did it happen that you were expelled in 1929?

**A.** That's a complicated story. You might almost say it goes back in a way to the sixth congress. Although our party speculated on Stalin ruling the International, I never liked him. Just like I voted for Franklin Roosevelt, but I never liked him. And fairly soon, I became highly critical of Stalin. When the Cannon group supported Trotsky, I opposed them, because I did not believe in splitting the communist movement; this was our party. But I really did not like Stalin's methods. I was against the idea of the police state. I felt that Stalin had perverted Leninism. I did not see, as we all see now, that the seed of Stalinism *was* Leninism. But I was very much opposed to Stalin. Although I felt it was my party, and that some day it would find the right path and the right leadership, I just stopped going to the meetings.

However, through Bill Dunne, who was my closest friend, I played with the idea of organising some kind of an anti-Stalin faction. It was a very delicate and difficult matter, much more difficult than organising a faction under Lenin. I felt that Bill Dunne would be good material for this, because he was so anti-Browder.

**Q.** You're speaking now after your expulsion, or before?

**A.** This is *after* my expulsion, that's right. I just dropped out of activity, and I was expelled.

**Q.** You were expelled for not attending the meetings?

**A.** Well, I was expelled for 'petit-bourgeois tendencies'. It was called 'petit-bourgeois tendencies' in an editorial in the *Daily Worker* about my expulsion.

**Q.** What was the basis for calling you that?

**A.** Well, I worked for the *Wall Street Journal*—didn't attend the party meetings—

**Q.** And you were earning your living outside the party then—you were no longer working for the party?

**A.** Yes, at that time I was no longer working for the party, because at that time the Lovestoneites had control of the party. They didn't keep it long. They lost control in the spring of 1929. But at that time they had it. So they threw me out—

**Q.** Oh, *they* expelled you?

**A.** No, they didn't expel me; they threw me out of the job. I had to make a living. And I had previously worked on a financial journal in Chicago, before I had worked for the party. In between that job and my working for the party, I had never worked, except for the party, on one job or another. This was 1929, the market was booming, and I thought I surely could get a job on a paper in Wall Street. And I asked Foster: What do you think of my taking a job? Would it be proper

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for me to take a job on a Wall Street paper? And he said: I don't see why not. After all, you're not going to write editorials in favour of capitalism. So I said: All right. However, although I was expelled from the party, I was in very close touch; in fact, I was part of the caucus. Then I turned my attention to the John Reed Club, which previously I had scorned—and the cultural movement, the peripheral movement. I became part of the group that formed the Theatre Union—that's how I got into this theatre business—just to do something that would still be in the orbit of the party, and yet not be of the party. And Bill still remained my closest friend.

I remained a person who considered the party to be my party, until—I would say—it might have been as late as 1938. No—not that late. Because during the Spanish Civil War, when Liston Oak was in Spain, which was in 1936 or 1937 I wrote him a letter, and in this letter I tried to get him to develop some international connections for the faction that we were forming in the American party—though I wasn't in the party—against Browder. We were—at least *I* was—trying to make this an anti-Stalin faction.

**Q.** But that was many years after your expulsion.

**A.** It didn't start then—it had been going on for a long time; it reached the stage when I wrote to Liston Oak—and the reason I mentioned it is because this letter was found, and printed in the *Daily Worker*, and that's when I really was denounced by the party. That's when Bill Dunne wrote to me and said, in that section of the front where I command, you will be treated as an enemy, and broke off all relations. He wrote me a letter of about ten pages, denouncing me. Because Bill had been strictly anti-Browder—exclusively—not anti-Stalin at all, you see. And I was hoping that I could harness this anti-Browderism to an international anti-leadership movement.

**Q.** Was Dunne the only one—or did you have hopes then of some kind of substantial group to start with?

**A.** Well, Dunne was my key man. He was the only one of that much prominence in the American party. There were others—

**Q.** What was the basis of this opposition to Browder?

**A.** Well, we opposed from the left.

**Q.** In other words, you were against the popular front.

**A.** Well, that puts it too strongly. Browder was liquidating the party almost, as we saw it. You see. . . .

**Q.** You're now talking about 1936–37?

**A.** I was opposing socialism in one country; I was opposing the whole tendency that Stalin represented. I was opposing the mockery of democratic centralism, the rule from above which Browder also represented in the American party, which all the leaders represented. This, however, was something that I could not accomplish, because I had no political standing; I was only trying to inspire it.

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**Q.** If that's the way you felt why didn't you join the Cannon-Trotsky group?

**A.** Because I never accepted Trotsky. I felt that Trotsky would be as bad as Stalin. After all, Trotsky had come up with the forced labour battalions—and Trotsky had ordered the Kronstadt shootings. There were many things about Trotsky that were very appealing, but there were many things about him that I felt represented the worst aspects of what I was opposed to in Stalin, though I can't say now that they were the worst aspects, because Stalin represented something much more sinister.

**Q.** It was true, wasn't it, that until late in 1934, the Browder line was anti-Roosevelt? What was your attitude towards that line, or weren't you aware of it?

**A.** As I recollect it, I was leftist on that thing; I was in favour of the anti-Roosevelt line; another reason why I was never a Trotskyite was because I saw no hope in these splinter groups. I felt that the party had to be captured from within—that this was the communist movement, that there would be no other.

**Q.** Were you hard hit by the Moscow trials at all, or did they pass you by, more or less?

**A.** I was very hard hit by them, but I was not hard hit by the Hitler-Stalin pact. In fact, I felt that it was all right. But the trials—I was very hard hit. Because to me it was the revolution beheading itself, and was really a torture for me.

**Q.** Of course, you knew the men, too. That made a big difference. And the whole history of the 1920s, from the outset, was to you a living history. To the boys who came in with the depression the twenties was pre-history, and the old-timers in the party never wanted to talk about them.

**A.** I thought that the Hitler-Stalin Pact—that Lenin would have made such a pact. I didn't see that Russia had any choice, that the Allies had tried to sick Hitler on Russia, that Russia had first tried to come to terms with the Allies, and that it was a matter of self-preservation almost. I did not, of course, take the position of Russia, because by that time I was very much an anti-communist. However, I was not one of these professional anti-communists—I never have been.

**Q.** Is it possible to use the name of Manuel Gomez without any explanation at all? Otherwise, it has to be completely anonymous. But Gomez is an historic figure. That is to say, people who look up the *Daily Worker* of the 1920s, or the magazines of the period, are going to find it; therefore it exists, and it gives some sense of reality. That's what I did in the book, simply citing the name.

**A.** I don't see that it makes a lot of difference—

**Q.** Well, if it makes no difference to you, I would say that editorially it does make some difference.

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# RADEK AND THE GERMAN REVOLUTION, II

*H. Schurer*

*The first part of this essay appeared in the October 1964 issue of* SURVEY.

RADEK described his year in Berlin as a prisoner in a light-hearted vein in an article entitled 'November', published in the Soviet literary journal *Krasnaya Nov* in 1926. It is extremely interesting, but perhaps even more valuable are some of his letters surviving from the period which show the process of his maturing. In one to the German journalist Alfons Paquet of 20 March 1919[1] there is a much more realistic appraisal of the German situation than in the speech of December 1918; he now saw clearly that in Russia the bolsheviks had the advantage of standing for the end of the war, had the support of large sections of the army, and were faced with a much weaker ruling class than the Germans.

No longer did he indulge in bloodthirsty fantasies of a Russo-German alliance at war with the Entente; he appreciated the immense war-weariness of the masses and the necessity for peace, however hard the conditions. His letter is pervaded by a genuine abhorrence of the senseless bloodshed which went on in the chaotic months after the German November Revolution. A strong communist party which could act as a moderating influence and hold the masses back from hopeless outbursts—this was the need of the moment.

Advising the German communists as to their future tactics, in October 1919 Radek came out strongly against the chiliastic mood of 1918, with its expectations of the disappearance of the trade unions, and its hopes of the speedy establishment of a soviet dictatorship. Far from disappearing, the unions had increased their membership by millions, while the soviets had proved ephemeral. Radek's advice to the KPD was to take part in parliamentary elections and in trade union work; he had no illusions about the speedy arrival of the world revolution. Indeed, his scepticism went so far as to contemplate the collapse of an isolated Soviet Russia: 'I am firmly convinced that in every country the proletariat will establish its dictatorship and see it collapse several times before it will achieve final victory'.[2] From this somewhat gloomy perspective Radek concluded that the idea that the relation between Russia and Germany could only be one of revolutionary contagion, as hitherto conceived, had to be replaced by the idea of a peaceful *modus vivendi*. This was a startlingly novel conclusion for a revolutionary to reach at the time, and it put Radek far ahead of every

[1] A. Paquet, *Der Geist der Russischen Revolution* (Leipzig, 1919), pp. ix–xi.
[2] K. Radek, *Zur Taktik des Kommunismus* (Berlin, 1919), p. 5.

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other leading communist, in Germany as well as in Russia. When, on his release, he returned to Russia at the beginning of 1920, Radek scandalised Bukharin, his old companion of the 'left communist' group of 1918, by his pessimism and scepticism.

It has been said that a straight road led from Radek's prison cell to Rapallo; this is hardly accurate. His well-documented encounters with many prominent members of the old and new ruling groups, politicians, officers, industrialists, certainly were unique, but at the time they led to no practical results. Among his visitors there were Rathenau, Felix Deutsch the industrialist, the Turkish exiled politicians Talaat and Enver Pasha, the former German foreign minister Hintze, army officers and young scholars, and (on his way back through Poland) General Sikorski. There were also, of course, meetings with representatives of the various wings of the German labour movement. In his spare time Radek edited a German collection of his pre-war and war articles.

BY October 1919 Radek found himself at odds with the KPD leader Paul Levi. Levi knew that in order to turn his splinter party into a national movement he had to get rid of the syndicalists. The left-wing socialist party (USP) was rapidly gaining influence during 1919. There was strong sympathy with the Russian Revolution among many of its members, but equally strong opposition to the syndicalist wing of the KPD who rejected participation in parliament and work in the trade unions, and believed in the efficacy of coups by a minority. Once the syndicalists had been cast out of the KPD, the road to unification with a sizeable proportion of the USP was clear.

At the Heidelberg KPD congress of October 1919 Levi carried out this split, almost wrecking the KPD in the process, but laying the foundations for the mass party of the future. The USP, by the end of 1919 nearly a million strong, was moving rapidly towards the left, and Levi had well-founded hopes of bringing it over to the communist fold with only small losses. Radek, fearful that a flabby mass party would dilute the revolutionary spirit of the Comintern, was unhappy about the Heidelberg split. Lenin, too, in a letter to the Italian socialists of October 1919 published in *Avanti*, wrote that in 1918 Rosa Luxemburg had acted wisely in not splitting the KPD over the issues of participation in elections and staying in the trade unions, as these were really of a minor nature. So long as the errant comrades had a healthy detestation of bourgeois democracy, there was hope for them, and when the news of the Heidelberg split reached Moscow, the bolshevik leaders were taken aback. A few months later, however, Lenin was to be converted to Levi's views. The idea of creating a mass communist party operating in the arena of democracy was new, and differences were bound to arise. In the duel between Radek and Levi which was to go on throughout 1920 and the first quarter of 1921 concerning the tactics of German communism, the victory, in the eyes of their contemporaries, went to Radek. Looking back, it is clear that Levi had a far better grasp of the

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realities involved. While in prison, Radek had been elected to the central committee of the Russian CP and appointed secretary of the Comintern; on his return he became one of the key figures in creating the European communist movement as it took shape in 1920, in response to the Moscow initiative. Shortly thereafter, the 'Kapp putsch' reinforced his conviction that the KPD needed continual prodding and a firm Russian hand to guide it along the right road.

In March 1920 this attempted military coup in Germany brought out the trade unions, the SPD, and the USP in a general strike which was completely successful. Only the KPD stood aside, declaring that no worker should lift a finger for bourgeois democracy, and that in any case the working class had been too gravely weakened by the reformists to undertake mass action. Levi, in prison at the time, protested against this insane policy, and to Radek in Moscow it must have been the last straw. That the party should fail so utterly when there really was a political general strike such as they had discussed before 1914—that was too much. There was no more talk of 'older brother' and 'teacher'. Radek swung round to the position that the Russians had to tell the Germans what to do, or the KPD would founder. As secretary of the Comintern, he took from now on a domineering attitude towards the German communists; at about the same time, in April 1920, Lenin, in his '*Left-Wing' Communism, an infantile disorder*, emphasised how much the experience of Russia and Russian bolshevism had to give to the West European labour movement, how much the older brother had to learn from the younger.

This conviction of Russian superiority reinforced Moscow's growing habit of elaborating rules and instructions intended for universal application; the '21 conditions of admission' laid down by the Comintern at its second congress in the summer of 1920 were to be the test, regardless of the specific situation in any country. They were the cause of further disagreement between Radek and Levi when it came to the question of how to deal with the USP. Radek was prepared to split that party, while Levi suggested that it should, if possible, be brought into the fold as an entity, leaders and all. Should a split be necessary, then it must be over issues arising out of vital problems of German policy, not mechanically over the acceptance or rejection of conditions applicable to all parties and drawn up by a central body in Moscow.

On this issue the Russians won, but, contrary to their expectations, a considerable number of the USP leaders came over. Levi's policy of eliminating the syndicalist wing of the KPD had made a large part of the USP, leaders as well as rank and file, ready for fusion with the communists. This happened in October 1920, and Levi could look at the establishment of a mass communist party in Germany as a great personal triumph. But the International was not what Radek had forecast in his address to the 'elder brothers' in December 1918—a voluntary association of revolutionary mass parties arisen out of their struggles in their own countries, none of them having a dominant position.

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If the Germans had run the Second International, there was no doubt who ran the Third.

WHEN in December 1920 the small Spartacus group fused with the pro-Comintern USP wing to found the United KPD, with a total membership of 350,000, Radek appeared as Comintern delegate. He warned the comrades against the errors of over cautious anti-putschism, as—to his mind—exemplified by the attitude of Paul Levi. No doubt the position of the KPD, which at the elections of June 1920 had scored exactly 14,000 votes in Berlin (compared with 456,000 for the USP and 187,000 for the SPD) was now different, but to a man with Paul Levi's grasp of realities this did not mean that revolution was round the corner. Elections showed that the reformist wing of the labour movement was recovering ground, at the expense both of the USP rump and the new KPD, which received fewer votes than the left wing had got in June 1920.

To many of the leaders, however, the fact of having emerged from the status of a tiny sect to a mass party—even if the prestige of Soviet Russia had been the decisive factor in this—proved intoxicating. While Levi groped for a communist policy suited to the special conditions of Germany, in international relations as well as at home, in order to get away from the eternal abstractions, the chiliastic spirit revived again.

At the beginning of 1921 Levi resigned as leader of the KPD after a clash with the Comintern over an obscure issue. The party made a sharp turn to the left, a move welcomed by Radek, and at this point some Comintern agents, led by Bela Kun, appeared in Berlin to prod the KPD into real action.

The details have never been cleared up, but Radek's position is the most unclear of all. On 21 March he wrote from Moscow to the KPD: 'You must do everything to mobilise the party. One cannot shoot any action out of a revolver. If you do not now do everything, through uninterrupted pressure for action by the communist masses, to create a feeling for the need for such action, you will again fail at the great moment'.[3] But it seems likely that Radek was kept in the dark by the people who sent Bela Kun to Berlin with orders which he interpreted as an instruction to start a revolution.

In March 1921, an uprising of German communists was attempted in a number of regions. The venture proved a complete fiasco, described at the end of 1922, at the fourth congress of the Comintern, as criminal folly. Paul Levi denounced the rising for what it was, and he and his followers were expelled. Among these who spoke against Levi, Radek emerged as chief counsel for the prosecution. There is no doubt that Levi was right in his condemnation of the imbecility of launching this hopeless caricature of a civil war, and Radek cuts a very poor figure as his antagonist.

In June 1921, at the third Comintern congress, Lenin and Trotsky

[3] E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917–1923*, vol. iii (London, 1953), p. 338.

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declared in so many words that Levi had been right in everything concerning the March action, but they endorsed his expulsion on charges of violating party discipline by speaking his mind. In the profound crisis which shook the party, the KPD lost half its membership; many of the leaders followed Levi. The policy which Radek had helped to bring about, even if direct responsibility for the March action cannot be pinned on him, almost wrecked the party within a few months of its foundation as a mass movement.

The catastrophe of March 1921 proved the beginning of a new phase in Radek's life. In his search for a new type of communism specially designed for Weimar Germany, he went further away from the communist orthodoxies of 1919 and 1920 than Paul Levi had ever dreamed of doing. This phase is Radek's most original contribution to the communist cause.

It was at the end of 1921 that the new Radek emerged. In January of that year Paul Levi had made an attempt to overcome the worst effects of the split in the German labour movement by addressing an open letter to the other two parties, the trade unions, and the syndicalists, suggesting common action on a platform of moderate demands. While normally far to the left of Levi, Radek had seen the possibilities of the new tactics and had endorsed them, if not indeed helped to formulate them, but they had been rejected by Bukharin and Zinoviev. Radek can thus be called one of the architects of the tactics of the united front, which was to characterise Comintern policy for years to come. By the end of 1921 the Comintern had swung round to the new tactics, in the teeth of opposition from the French and Italian parties.

At the same time Radek put forward ideas which represented a startling break with the customary attitude to 'bourgeois democracy'. In a few German *Länder*, Saxony, Thuringia, Brunswick, SPD-USP governments had been formed which depended on KPD support in the diets. Levi had no hesitation in steering the KPD towards a policy of support for these 'labour governments'. Radek went further, proposing that under favourable conditions communists should enter such governments.

IT was in 1922, too, that Radek appeared most prominently on the diplomatic stage. He had been the earliest advocate of a *modus vivendi* between Germany and Russia, and when Russia made her comeback to the European stage by attending the Genoa Conference, Radek took an active part in the Soviet-German negotiations. He came out with a spirited defence of Soviet *Realpolitik* and argued in terms, not of world revolution but of good old-fashioned 'balance of power'. Russia could remain a great power if she had in defeated Germany a counterweight to the power of the victors of Versailles; he had indeed travelled a long way from the days of 1918, when he believed that the survival of Soviet Russia depended on the victory of the German revolution and on nothing else.

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In February 1922 Radek arrived in Berlin in his new role of diplomat. Since the German archives are now open, we know some details about his mission. Among the people he met was the head of the German army, Seeckt, with whom he discussed the establishment of armament industries in Russia, for the mutual benefit of the Germans and of the Red Army. A second meeting between Radek and the German officers took place in December 1922, in Schleicher's Berlin flat. Fanciful as ever, Radek, who could not suppress his dreams even during hardheaded business negotiations, talked to Seeckt of a Soviet attack on Poland in the spring of 1922 and in December indulged in fantasies of an anti-Entente alliance between Germany, Russia, the United States, and China. That the man who confronted Seeckt was at the same time the genius inspiring the policy of German communism was no secret to the General. That Radek was able to combine these parts, proves the immense intellectual agility of the man. He obviously enjoyed being able to play these contradictory roles, uniting various policies in one person. After his meeting with Seeckt in February Radek stayed on in Berlin and the basic draft of a German-Soviet treaty appears to have been arrived at in negotiations between him and Maltzan in March and April. Thus Radek, in alliance with Chicherin and Krasin, was one of the chief architects of the Rapallo policy.

The position of Germany vis-à-vis the Entente, particularly after the Rapallo Treaty, suggested possibilities to Radek. The German right-wing army chiefs were far more ready to establish friendly relations with Russia than the liberals and social-democrats had been. In his search for a policy designed for the special German post-war situation, especially after the arrangements for Reichswehr-Red Army cooperation in which he had played a prominent part, Radek must have considered whether German nationalism could not be harnessed to the communist cause. Only this can explain his conversation with the distinguished German scholar Ernst Troeltsch at the time of the Genoa conference. Troeltsch reported it immediately afterwards in the *Kunstwart* (11 May 1922), where he ran a column as a political commentator. According to Troeltsch, Radek advocated a German-Soviet alliance as a step towards the communist world revolution:

> The Soviets want to unite for this purpose the German communists and the German extreme nationalists. . . . I talked to Radek at a party recently in Berlin. . . . He strongly emphasised the nationalism of the Soviets, who regarded the so-called testament of Peter the Great as logical, and he emphasised equally the necessity for communists and extreme nationalists in Germany to unite in a common struggle against West European capitalism. . . . Radek said he had discussed the matter with the most distinguished German counter-revolutionary author, but had not been able to reach an agreement. . . . Only communists and nationalists united could solve the world crisis and establish a new planned economy.

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There were two strands in Radek's thought: the need to defend democracy against anti-democratic forces from the right, which required a united front with the social-democrats. In Germany this was an urgent problem, making for the establishment of SPD-KPD coalition governments, at least on the *Land* level, and suggesting that the recent splits had been temporary wartime phenomena, and that they could be healed in the non-revolutionary period which had set in.

On the other hand, German nationalism might be given an Eastern orientation, and that might imply a conversion of large sections of the rebellious middle classes to communism, although their starting point would be totally different from that of the original communist movement whose roots were its opposition to war and chauvinism. To combine these two approaches would in practice be impossible, but the task obviously appealed to the over-subtle and over-ingenious Radek. If he could balance friendly relations with Seeckt with being the *spiritus rector* of the KPD, why should he not be able to balance an appeal to the nationalists with an appeal to the reformists?

It was a period of soul-searching and rethinking in Radek's life. His mind roved in all directions, trying out new approaches, discarding traditional doctrines, and inevitably he came into conflict with the guardians of orthodoxy such as Bukharin and, even more, Zinoviev. He had clashed with them at the beginning of 1921 over the novel tactics of the united front, and when the new theory of a 'workers government' was put forward, obviously implying far-reaching concessions to the concept of an elected parliamentary government, Radek's approach was far more flexible and more conciliatory towards social-democracy than Zinoviev's, and the two again came into sharp disagreement. In 1922, when preparations were being made to draft a programme for the Comintern, Radek was foremost among those who wanted it to include these two concepts, whereas Bukharin regarded them as temporary tactical devices which had no place in a programme dedicated to the recital of the eternal communist verities.

MUSSOLINI's triumph in Italy in 1922 was dismissed by Zinoviev lightly as a comedy; Radek regarded it as the greatest defeat the revolution had suffered since the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Significantly enough, he mentioned in one and the same sentence that the Italian socialists had not cared enough for the war veterans and had been opposed to the war, thus adumbrating an important truth—that the long-term effect of a radical socialist movement which is revolutionary in appearance but not strong enough to achieve power, may be only to frighten the middle classes into a militant fascism which destroys all working-class organisations. That the Comintern's splitting tactics in 1921—then enthusiastically supported by Radek—had contributed to the decline of the Italian labour movement was forgotten.

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At the time Lenin had warmly defended the anti-war policy of the Italian socialists, attributing it to the absence of a 'labour aristocracy'. Now, drafting instructions for the Soviet delegation which Radek led in December 1922 to the international trade union congress at the Hague that was to discuss the prevention of war, Lenin drastically modified everything he had written in the war years. There was nothing left of the traditional view of a revolutionary working class misled by treacherous leaders into a patriotic policy, but a candid acknowledgement of the strength of the ties attaching the working classes to their own countries. 'It is necessary to explain to the people how great is the secrecy in which war arises, and how helpless the ordinary organisations of the workers are, even those which call themselves revolutionary, in face of the real and definite approach of war. It is necessary to explain to the people again and again, in practical and concrete terms, what the state of affairs was at the time of the last war and why it could not be otherwise. It is necessary to explain, in particular, the significance of the fact that "defence of the fatherland" is a question which is bound to arise, and which the great majority of the working people will answer in favour of their own bourgeoisie.' [4]

Radek was deeply impressed by these words (fifteen years later he quoted them at his own trial), and in November 1922, at the fourth Comintern congress, he made a similarly realistic analysis.

> The broadest masses of the proletariat have lost belief in their ability to conquer power in any foreseeable time. . . . If the great majority of the working class feels itself powerless, then the conquest of power as an immediate task of the day is not on the agenda. . . . The retreat of the proletariat has not yet come to a stop.[5]

There was a good deal of talk at the congress about the Treaty of Versailles; Germany was being turned into a 'colony of the French bourgeoisie', into 'a plaything in the hands of Britain and France'. To Radek, one of the architects of the Rapallo policy, this 'first instance in Europe . . . of a conscious and calculated effort to coordinate Comintern action with the foreign policy of the Soviet Government' [6] must have been welcome, and the relevant resolutions may have been his work. It was his aim at the time to put communist policy on the concrete basis of real international relations and internal class relations, making it relevant to definite and particular situations, even if this meant discarding much of the communist orthodoxies established since 1914.

AT the Leipzig congress of the KPD in January 1923, which Radek attended clandestinely, the break with orthodoxy was pushed a few more steps forward. Brandler, Radek's protégé, made it clear that the

[4] V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniya*, 4th ed., vol. 33 (Moscow, 1950), p. 409.
[5] E. H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution 1917–23*, vol. iii (London, 1953), p. 444.
[6] Ibid. p. 455.

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KPD would be ineffective so long as it did not win the majority of the workers organised in the trade unions. 'As a starting point we must use the democratic illusions of the workers with a decent standard of living', he declared, thus demolishing the entire theory of the corrupt labour aristocracy. The skilled workers, the labour aristocracy, were to be the main target of the communist conversion campaign. The resolutions on the workers' government implied nothing less than the readiness of the KPD to collaborate with the SPD in a coalition government within the framework of the Weimar Constitution. The concept of bourgeois democracy versus proletarian dictatorship, used to justify the foundation of communist parties in opposition to the existing socialist parties, was quietly dropped. When Brandler said his aim was to push the SPD from the left wing of the bourgeoisie to the right wing of the working class, this implied that there should be only one working-class movement which would have to accommodate different trends. The KPD congress, by its 'wholesale recantation of all the basic principles of communism',[7] had gone a long way towards a reversal of the trend which had started in 1914. Lenin had discarded his interpretation of the policy of 4 August 1914, as a betrayal of the revolutionary workers by their leaders; Radek and Brandler now moved towards the defence of democracy against attacks from the right, and envisaged the possibility of a policy favouring working-class interests carried out by an SPD/KPD coalition established by democratic means.

About the time of the Leipzig congress Varga, whose writings Radek carefully studied, analysed some of the differences between Russia and the West (which today we would call the differences between an underdeveloped and an advanced country). In Russia the masses of the workers outside the bolshevik party were an unorgainsed class, while in the West they were organised in trade unions and political parties; in Russia the peasants were an amorphous mass, while in the West they were small capitalists; in the West the intelligentsia was closely allied to the ruling class and to a great extent permeated by the ideology of bourgeois democracy. 'It is impossible', Varga concluded, 'without further reservations to apply the experiences of the Russian revolution to Western Europe.'[8]

The attitude which the KPD took to the occupation of the Ruhr by the French in January 1923 was not an echo of the 'defeatism' of the Bolsheviks in 1917. When Thalheimer wrote in February: 'During the last war, a French defeat was not an aim of German communism; in the Ruhr conflict to-day it is', this was not an attempt by the KPD to accommodate itself to the demands of Soviet foreign policy. It was another aspect of the general revisionist trend in the party. The main aim remained the conquest of the organised section of the working class. Yet in 1923, in his desire to adjust the policy of the KPD to the

[7] F. Borkenau, *The Communist International* (London, 1938), p. 236.
[8] E. H. Carr, *Socialism in one country*, vol. iii., pt. 1 (London, 1964), p. 498.

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peculiarities of the German situation, Radek embarked on policies which were bound to alienate the great mass of organised workers, by overplaying the appeal to nationalism, emphasising it far more than would have sufficed to bring KPD and SPD together in a defensive national front against Poincaré's Ruhr policy. When the warring KPD factions were called to Moscow in May to patch up some sort of reconciliation, the new interest in nationalism as a potential revolutionary factor, and the approach to the middle classes, found expression in the resolutions of Comintern.

Radek marked the new departure with a speech which for once attracted attention outside the communist ranks. It was even reprinted in a collection of documents on recent German history published under the Nazis![9] The execution by a French firing squad of the German nationalist terrorist Schlageter called up all the pathos and powers of dramatisation of which Radek was capable. By stressing the revolutionary impulse in a man like Schlageter, and ignoring the differences between a creed which originally sprang from cosmopolitan humanitarianism and the crude nationalist activism of which Schlageter was such a typical representative, Radek claimed that the true nationalists would achieve their aims only if they accepted the leadership of the communists. He did not advocate an alliance or cooperation; he suggested that, while starting from different premises, the nationalists would come over to the communists as their only hope and become communists in the process. 'Schlageter, the courageous soldier of the counter-revolution, deserves honest and manly esteem from us, soldiers of the revolution'.

There was a strong undercurrent of dishonesty and trickery about the Schlageter campaign which the KPD waged for a few weeks; the great majority of the party leaders did not participate in it, nor was it popular with the rank and file. But, while the situation in Germany became tense under the impact of galloping inflation, Radek showed that the Schlageter line had not deflected him from the main task ahead—united front with the SPD. He advised moderation, and wrote that, though the bolshevik party had only 70,000 members when it took power, it controlled large sections of the army, while the Russian ruling classes were disorganised. To have the same success on German soil the KPD would have to have at least a million members. 'We must always keep in mind that we are at the moment still the weaker'.[10]

IN Germany the wave of strikes and the widespread evidence of discontent brought about the fall of the government. In Stresemann's new coalition government the social-democrats were again represented. Although the intention of the new government to restore stability and halt inflation was obvious (it was in fact the prelude to a period of

[9] E. Forsthoff, ed., *Deutsche Geschichte seit 1918 in Documenten.* 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, 1938), pp. 142–48.

[10] Cited in W. T. Angress, *Stillborn Revolution* (Princeton, 1963), p. 367.

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consolidation that was to last to the autumn of 1929), the Comintern leaders regarded the Stresemann coalition as a 'Kerensky regime', the initial stage of the 'German October'. Foremost among them was Trotsky, who at last saw the opening of a new chapter in the permanent revolution. When, on 23 August, the Politburo met in secret, Radek was called in to give a report on the German situation. There is no official record, but apparently this time the optimism felt by Trotsky, then the greatest influence over him, must have induced Radek to speak far more optimistically than was customary for him. Radek was proverbially highly impressionable, and no doubt the fear of failing the German revolution as the KPD had failed in March 1920 must have carried him away. This moment of weakness, of acting and speaking against his better judgment, would in a few months mean the end of his career as a statesman and Soviet leader.

A small committee was set up to organise the German revolution, and while accounts of its composition differ, there is no doubt that it was headed by Radek; Brandler and some other KPD leaders were summoned to Moscow. Moscow's preparations went on to the beginning of October. Trotsky, eager as ever to give his position a theoretical basis, argued in *Pravda* (23 September 1923), that it was possible to fix a definite schedule for a counter-revolution or revolution.

Brandler and Radek were taken aback by this optimistic date-fixing in Moscow for an event which it was thought would be a turning point in European history, by the unreal atmosphere of revolutionary wishful thinking. Even Stalin, who hitherto had shown a sober grasp of German realities and who had been sceptical about the prospects of a German October, came round in the end. His letter to Thalheimer, published in the *Rote Fahne* of 10 October, roused profound apprehension among the German authorities. In it he re-stated the basic assumptions on which the October Revolution had been based, and added: 'The German Revolution will be far more important than the Russian; when it comes, the centre of world revolution will be shifted from Moscow to Berlin.' [11]

The events of October 1923 in Germany have been debated for many years, but all the evidence leads to the simple conclusion that the whole enterprise was completely hopeless from the very first. The conditions which might have turned the German nation to communism as 'the only way out' simply did not exist. Brandler showed himself a responsible and serious leader and called the planned rising off, when a conference held on 21 October in Chemnitz, representing the labour movement of the most left-wing *Land* in Germany, decided against mass action in face of the imminent threat to the left-wing *Land* government from Berlin. Next day Radek arrived in Germany with his colleagues and was faced with the fait accompli. He showed equal sanity and realism and endorsed Brandler's decision.

[11] Ibid. p. 428.

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That the fiasco would virtually finish his political career he cannot have realised at the time. Early in December Radek and his Soviet colleagues went back to Russia.

WITHOUT the background of the Russian factional struggles the details of Radek's downfall would remain obscure. They can be summed up in a few words. Before his departure for Germany in October Radek had expressed solidarity with the 'Declaration of the 46', a document uniting the opposition on a common platform against the Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev *troika,* and a landmark in the history of the battle of the opposition. On his return to Russia in December, Radek declared at a party meeting in Moscow that if the *troika* took measures against Trotsky, the German and French communists would back him, and the Polish communists also made a similar statement in Trotsky's favour. This was a typical bit of recklessness on Radek's part. His speech was bound to exacerbate the existing divisions; having returned from Germany with his mission unaccomplished, Radek was an obvious target, even if in the long run Trotsky was the man for whom the blow was intended. The party discussion in Russia and the German defeat became inextricably linked. The *troika* hit back. On 27 December 1923 Zinoviev, at a session of the Politburo, started a general offensive against Radek. He was censured for his activities in Germany, and in the subsequent struggle lost his position as member of the Central Committee at the 13th Party congress in May 1924, and his position in the Comintern at the 5th congress a month or two later. The promising developments within German communism of which Radek and Brandler had been protagonists since the second half of 1921 were ended with the attack on Brandler at the end of 1923. Radek's and Brandler's search for a Western brand of communism based on a realistic evaluation of German realities was buried in the factional battles between Stalin and Trotsky, between the German left and the German right. Radek was the first prominent member of the close circle around Lenin before and after the revolution to be disgraced and stripped of his party offices.

His talents were still used, particularly in party journalism, and sometimes for diplomatic missions, but the days of power were over. Again and again the Comintern had to resist demands for his expulsion made by the new ruling group of the KPD, which pursued him with deadly hatred. In 1925 he was appointed principal of the newly-founded Sun Yat-sen University at Moscow, which was set up to train young members of the Kuo Min Tang for work in China in close alliance with the Chinese Communist Party, and to foster the alliance of China with Soviet Russia. He remained an ally of Trotsky, and when the warfare between Stalin and the newly formed Trotsky-Zinoviev bloc of 1926 became particularly acute precisely over the China question, Radek attacked Stalin's China policy at a session of the Communist Academy. When the events of spring 1927 in Shanghai proved that the opposition's case had been justified, the result was the same as it had been in the

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case of Paul Levi, and was to be more than once again under Stalin—the critic who had been proved right by events was punished. Radek was dismissed as principal of the Sun Yat-sen University; this was universally and rightly regarded as the beginning of the final onslaught on the Trotsky opposition.

At the end of 1927 Trotsky and his group were expelled from the party; Radek stuck to his guns and refused to surrender. He was one of the people evicted from the Kremlin in the action against the opposition, and in a few months time found himself in Siberian exile. The pressure on the oppositionists was so heavy that in time all the leaders capitulated to Stalin. It was typical of Radek that a long critique of Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution heralded his surrender in the middle of 1929.

The rest of Radek's story can be told in a few lines. At first there was still plenty of the old sparkle left in the man who now became once more a leading journalist, but whose political line from now on was dictated to him from above. Radek, the ultra-rightist of 1921–23, had to defend the ultra-leftist policy of the KPD in 1929–33, to defend every twist and turn of Stalin's policy, and he did it all very competently. If anybody pushed the cult of personality to its limits, it was Radek in a eulogy of Stalin placed in the year 1967, the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution, and given in the form of a lecture at the College of Astronautics! Radek went out of his way to abase himself in criticising his own Luxemburgist errors, explicitly referring to himself by name. His appearance at the Soviet writers' congress in 1934 was almost a self-parody. He who in 1916 had denounced the Easter rising as a petty-bourgeois *putsch*, now criticised James Joyce for not mentioning the rebellion in his *Ulysses*. As the action of Joyce's novel is placed in 1904, Radek can only have been parodying the method of socialist realism by pushing it into the realms of absurdity, a typical gesture of feeble defiance by a man who no longer believes in what he says.

Radek and another pardoned opponent of Stalin, Bukharin, had a considerable part in drawing up the Constitution of 1936—and to many it may have seemed that he was on his way back to favour and power. In August 1936 he demanded the death sentence for Zinoviev and Kamenev—a ghoulish way of settling old scores with the man who had broken Radek's career in 1923. By the end of the year the fate which was to overwhelm this whole generation of leaders overtook him. He was arrested and appeared in the trial of January 1937. Radek escaped the death sentence. His fate remained uncertain for many years. Only in recent years, in the briefest references, have Soviet publications given the year of his death as 1939. How Radek met his death is still unknown.

* * * *

Radek was an extraordinary personality. All who met him were struck by the oddity of his appearance, 'suggesting something between Puck

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and Wolf, a bit of a street Arab, a cheeky, amusing, and terrifying Mephisto physiognomy'—that is how Count Kessler described him in his diary in 1922.[12] 'His features, in a frame of unkempt brownish hair, seemed curiously out of focus, his teeth charred and uneven, his eyes very much alive behind thick glasses. . . . We left his presence feeling as though we had watched a one-man circus crowded with incredible feats of intellectual agility', Eugene Lyons wrote later.[13]

Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, who met him shortly after the revolution, gives an amusing picture:

> A little man with a huge head, protruding ears, clean shaven face (in those days he did not wear that awful fringe which now passes for a beard), with spectacles, and a large mouth with yellow, tobacco-stained teeth, from which a huge pipe or cigar was never absent, he was always dressed in a quaint drab-coloured Norfolk suit with knickers and leggings. . . . Almost every day he would turn up in my rooms, an English cap stuck jauntily on his head, his pipe puffing fiercely, a bundle of books under his arm, and a huge revolver strapped to his side. He looked like a cross between a professor and a bandit.[14]

All observers agree on his tremendous sense of humour, his biting wit, his powers of sarcasm, his entertaining brand of cynicism, his sharp tongue. 'Rich in humour, witty, diabolically clever, lover of facts, hater of utopias, admirer of Macchiavelli'—that is how Wilhelm Herzog, meeting him in Moscow in 1920, sums him up.[15]

The studied bohemian exterior, the deliberate air of self-parody, the cultivated image of eccentricity, this, with his destructive wit and disrespect for authority, were outward signs of the emphasis which Radek, alone of the leading bolsheviks of Jewish descent, placed on his Jewishness. Radek was fond of a Jewish joke—with a slight undercurrent of what is called self-hatred and self-parody always present—'his anecdotes were almost exclusively those which dealt with Jews and which put them in a ridiculous or degrading light,' says Balabanova.[16]

There are many tributes to his great personal kindliness, and much evidence of a vulnerable, sensitive, and sentimental personality beneath the tough exterior. He was fond of indulging in bloodthirsty fantasies, talking again and again of the gallows on which the revolutionary workers would string up their reformist leaders. He must have derived tremendous pleasure from acting the diplomat and the revolutionary at one and the same time. His knowledge was encyclopaedic, his interests wide—he took Einstein's writings back to Russia from Germany, and showed a great interest in psychoanalysis and thought Marx and Freud

12 Harry Graf Kessler, *Tagebücher, 1918–37* (Frankfurt, 1961), p. 354.
13 E. Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia* (London, 1937), p. 585.
14 R. B. Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent* (London, 1932), p. 255.
15 W. Herzog, in *Forum*, vol. iv, 1920, p. 836.
16 A. Balabanoff, *My Life as a Rebel* (London, 1938), p. 272.

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could live together peacefully within one comprehensive theory of world understanding. The great emotional experience of his life appears to have been his association with the beautiful and gifted Larissa Reissner, whom sudden death snatched away before she was 30, in the same bitter year 1927 which witnessed Radek's expulsion from the movement which he had served for so many years.

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# AUGUST BEBEL

*F. L. Carsten*

FOR three-quarters of a century the German Social-Democratic Party, the SPD, has been one of the strongest political parties in Germany. For many years—between 1912 and 1932—it was the strongest party in the Reichstag, to be eclipsed in the latter year by the rising Nazi party, as it has been in post-war Germany by the ruling Christian Democratic party. The political influence exercised by the SPD during the early years of the Weimar Republic, when the president as well as most ministers were moderate socialists, was stronger than that of any other party; it bears much of the responsibility for the failures as well as the achievements of the Weimar Republic. It withstood the onslaught of Nazism more successfully than any other party, retaining to a large extent the loyalty of its followers. Its leaders actively participated in the resistance to Hitler during the war years, and to the imposition of communist control in Berlin and East Germany after the war, thus proving anew their fidelity to democratic principles. Yet when in power in the years after 1918 the SPD was curiously ineffective and weak; and it abdicated power to the forces of reaction without even a show of resistance and thus shared in the inglorious dissolution of the Weimar Republic.

No other person had such a profound influence on the development of the SPD, being responsible alike for its successes and its weaknesses, as August Bebel, its uncontested leader from its foundation until his death in August 1913. To the present day Bebel enjoys the almost unique distinction of being acclaimed in West as well as in East Germany.[1] The famous historian Theodor Mommsen, who was certainly no political friend of Bebel's, wrote: 'Everybody in Germany knows that a dozen of the Eastalbian Junkers, if collectively fitted out with a head such as Bebel's, would shine among their peers'.[2] When a Swiss newspaper erroneously reported that Bebel had died, Marx, in a letter to Engels, declared this to be 'the greatest disaster for our party!' He considered him unique (*eine einzige Erscheinung*) within the German, and even the European working-class movement,[3] and he was probably right.

In contrast with so many other socialist leaders, Bebel was not an intellectual and was entirely self-educated. Born in 1840, the son of an n.c.o. in the Prussian army, he attended only an elementary school and

1 See, for example, the articles by Dieter Fricke, 'August Bebel heute', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* (East Berlin), 1963, pp. 1045, 1252, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the death of 'the great leader of the German workers'.

2 Mommsen in *Die Nation*, xx, 13 December 1902; quoted by Fricke, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 1960, p. 278.

3 *Briefwechsel zwischen Friedrich Engels und Karl Marx*, ed. A. Bebel and E. Bernstein, iv (Stuttgart, 1919), p. 478.

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would have followed his father's career if he had not been pronounced unfit for military service on account of his poor health. He thus became a turner and got to know his country during years of wandering as a journeyman in search of work. He then settled in Saxony which was industrially more advanced and had a much stronger liberal tradition than the neighbouring Prussia. In Leipzig he became active in the workers' educational movement, trying to arouse the interest of his fellow-workers in the betterment of their status. At a time of the growth of the liberal and national movement he also became interested in politics. At that time, the *Arbeitervereine* (workingmen's clubs) were a part of the general liberal movement which aimed at German unification through a German Parliament, as had been unsuccessfully attempted in 1848.

From the outset, Bebel stood on the left and radical side; he was in favour of a German republic and democratic unity, opposed to a constitutional monarchy and the unification of Germany by Prussia. His views were identical with those of the south German democrats, but he was also critical of their lack of courage. He remained an inveterate enemy of Bismarck's policy, which to him was not German, but Great Prussian, 'aiming at winning mastery over the whole of Germany and at imbuing Germany with a Prussian spirit and Prussian principles of government—which are the mortal enemy of all democracy.' After the foundation of the North German Confederation by Bismarck, Bebel, as a deputy in the Reichstag, publicly protested against a federation 'that makes Germany a large barracks and destroys the last remnant of freedom and popular rights'. The outbreak of the Austro-Prussian war of 1866 he considered a catastrophe and called for an uprising of the people to resist the peace-breaker, Prussia. To him, an Austrian victory was preferable to Prussia's because in that case 'the ministry of Bismarck and the rule of the Junkers which to the present day oppress Germany like a nightmare would have been swept away'.[4] Many years later, in 1912, he still remembered: 'It was one of the saddest days of my life when it became known in 1866 that Austria was expelled from the German Confederation'.[5] The majority of the German liberals, on the other hand, and many German socialists too, were won over by Prussia's military victories and now put their hopes in a Prussian leadership of Germany. Bebel's enmity to Ferdinand Lassalle and the rival socialist party founded by him had its roots, above all, in their differing attitudes towards Prussia and the German state founded by Bismarck.

IN the same year in which Prussia defeated Austria and expelled her from Germany, Bebel became a member of the First International, the International Working Men's Association. It had been founded with

[4] August Bebel, *Aus meinem Leben*, 7th ed. (Stuttgart, 1922), i, pp. 117, 153, 165; ii, pp. 3, 108, 145.

[5] *Victor Adler, Briefwechsel mit August Bebel und Karl Kautsky* (Vienna, 1954), p. 547.

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the active participation of Marx, but Bebel at that time knew virtually nothing of Marx's writings. As he himself describes it, he tried to read the *Critique of Political Economy*, but soon gave up the attempt. It was only some years later, during one of his many spells of imprisonment, that he found the time to read the first volume of *Das Kapital*. Even the *Communist Manifesto* and other more popular writings of Marx were not known to the German social-democrats at that time. Much better known were the writings of Lassalle, and these seem to have converted Bebel to socialism in the first instance. During his whole life-time Bebel was not much influenced by socialist theory; he was above all a tribune of the people.

Bebel's great hour came with the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870. Germany was gripped by anti-French fervour, and war against Bonaparte once more became the rallying cry that united the country. Even many social-democrats joined in the bellicose and nationalist outbursts. Yet in the North German Reichstag Bebel and his close friend Wilhelm Liebknecht refused to vote for the war credits demanded by the government, 'because this would be a vote of confidence in the Prussian government which has prepared the present war by its actions in the year 1866. . . . As foes of every dynastic war, as social republicans and members of the International Working Men's Association which opposes all oppressors without difference of nationality . . . we cannot declare ourselves either directly or indirectly in favour of this war and therefore abstain from voting . . .' This attitude met with sharp criticism even from high party officials, who branded it as Saxon particularism and almost caused a split in the party ranks. In November 1870—after the overthrow of the Second Empire and the proclamation of the French Republic—Bebel and Liebknecht went further. They voted against the new war credits and urged the government to conclude an immediate peace with France and to renounce any annexation of French territory. To them, the war had become 'a war against the French people, not a war of defence, but a war of conquest, not a war for the independence of Germany, but a war for the subjugation of the noble French nation . . .' Throughout Germany the party organised meetings against the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine and for an honourable peace with France. Its leaders were virtually the only Germans who realised that the annexation did 'not bring peace but war', as it created the continuing danger of another war, and that within Germany it strengthened the forces of military reaction.[6] History has justified this policy of the young and weak party.

The German constitution of 1871 was sharply criticised by Bebel in the Reichstag. On 25 May he attacked it as 'sham constitutionalism' and 'naked ceasarism' so that the chairman intervened and prevented him from continuing his speech. Bebel also bravely defended the

[6] Bebel, *Aus meinem Leben*, ii, pp. 179, 186, 194–96; *Der Hochverrats-Prozess wider Liebknecht, Bebel, Hepner vor dem Schwurgericht zu Leipzig vom 11. bis 26. März 1872*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1911), pp. 312–13, 414–18.

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Commune of Paris which had been brutally suppressed by the troops of the Versailles government, with the indirect help of Bismarck. In another Reichstag speech on 8 November 1871 he reminded his listeners 'that the battle in Paris is but a small encounter of outposts, that the main action in Europe is still to come and that, before many decades have passed, the battle-cry of the Parisian proletarians "war to the palaces, peace to the cottages, death to want and idleness!" will have become the battle-cry of the entire European proletariat'. No wonder that Bebel quickly earned the hatred of the respectable middle-class citizens and of the authorities of Bismarck's Germany. In the Leipzig treason trial of 1872, in which these and other speeches figured prominently in the indictment, he was sentenced once more to a term of imprisonment lasting two years. Some years later, when the Reichstag at Bismarck's insistence voted the law against the socialists, a renewed and more severe wave of persecution was unleashed against the social-democrats, leading to repeated banishments and expulsions of the leaders from their places of residence. These petty police measures undermined the existence of many party functionaries, but they kept alive the spirit of rebellion and the solidarity among the party members, who were treated like potential criminals by the authorities and looked at like pariahs by society. They were not part of the nation, but outside it.

Among the social-democrats this created an attitude of permanent protest and hostility to the state and its organs. It also created, as the members' loyalty never faltered and the party continued to grow, an almost touching belief in the masses and an easy optimism as to the future, ideas which remained characteristic of the leaders of the German Left. But there was considerable friction and disagreement among the party leaders, and in 1881 Bebel wrote to Engels: 'Fortunately the masses, as always, are better than the leaders and one day they will march ahead without taking notice of them . . . To me it is incomprehensible that one can look into the future with anything other than hope considering our state of affairs . . .' Two years later he reaffirmed his belief that 'only the best was to be hoped for' from the masses.[7] At the party congress at Erfurt in October 1891 he again proclaimed, this time as an argument against the moderates in the party, his 'great confidence in the good sense and the revolutionary instincts of the masses'. Against those who feared that the masses were not mature enough to make proper use of political power if it fell into the party's hands, Bebel argued at the Dresden party congress two years later, 'that in every great popular movement the right men have been found at the right time'; and he pointed to the work done by party members in the trade unions, in social insurance, in arbitration courts for trade disputes, and in parliament, as evidence of what working men could achieve. Yet this was a question which the critics were only too justified in putting. In 1918 power fell to the social-democrats, and the task of governing

[7] *Aus meinem Leben*, iii, pp. 169, 252.

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Germany found them completely unprepared. The problems of political power and its use had never been discussed, and subconsciously the party leaders did not believe that power would fall to them within the foreseeable future.

EQUALLY vague were Bebel's ideas about the methods which the SPD was going to use to achieve its aims. In 1870 he wrote: 'Whether the working class, following the example of the feudal nobility and the bourgeoisie, will use the same violent means . . . and will confiscate the private property of the bourgeoisie and transform it into common property . . . that is difficult to establish. The course of this development depends on the intensity with which the participating groups are drawn into the movement; it depends on the resistance which the movement encounters among its enemies. . . . There are two ways to achieve our goal. The first consists in the gradual displacement of the private entrepreneurs through legislation after the establishment of the democratic state. This route would be followed if the adversaries of the Social-Democratic movement in good time saw sense. . . . The other, much shorter, but also more violent route would be that of forcible expropriation, the elimination of the private entrepreneurs at one blow, by whatever methods. Accordingly, the outcome of the crisis depends on the capitalist class itself, the character of the crisis is determined by the ways in which it uses the means of power it possesses. . . .'[8]

Twenty years later, at the party congress of 1891, Bebel officially renounced the use of force, the building of barricades, in his opinion the means of the bourgeois party, and proclaimed: 'Bougeois society works so assiduously towards its own demise that we have merely to await the moment when we can pick up the power that is sliding from its hands. . . . Yes, I am convinced that the realisation of our ultimate goals is so near that only a few present in this hall will not see those days. . . .' In his opinion, 'a party which has millions behind it must operate more cautiously than a sect without any importance and any responsibility', like an 'army fighting against a vastly superior enemy that could not take its position by a frontal assault without bashing in its heads. It thus must advance inch by inch, pace by pace against the enemy until it can risk the decisive battle . . .'[9] These two pronouncements are difficult to reconcile with each other. If the enemy was 'vastly superior', how could the realisation of the socialists' ultimate goals be that near? How could they be certain that the capitalists would dig their own graves so that the socialists simply had to wait for the day when power would slide from the grasp of the bourgeoisie? No answer to these questions was attempted. Nor did Bebel and Liebknecht have

[8] Bebel, *Unsere Ziele*, 14th ed. (Berlin, 1919), pp. 19, 50.
[9] *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der SPD, abgehalten zu Erfurt* (Berlin, 1891), pp. 57, 172.

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a ready answer to the rhetorical question of the public prosecutor at their Leipzig trial whether the accused really believed that the princes would amicably descend from their thrones, that the civil servants would readily join the republican party, and that the commanding officers would voluntarily absolve the soldiers from their oaths of allegiance? [10]

Yet in other respects Bebel was a political realist. When, after the experiences of the Russian revolution of 1905, the Left in the SPD advocated the use of the general strike, especially to prevent the outbreak of war, Bebel replied: 'You have no idea of the situation that existed in 1870 at the outbreak of war. It is true that meanwhile we have become stronger; but the power at the disposal of our adversaries has also grown tremendously. . . . Who can believe that it is possible to organise a mass strike at a time when enormous excitement, a fever, grips the masses and stirs up the lowest depths, when the danger of a colossal war with its frightful misery faces us? That is a naive idea. At the outbreak of such a war five million men are called up in Germany the first day, among them many hundreds of thousands of party comrades. . . . If the party leaders were so rash as to proclaim on such a day a general strike, a state of siege would be declared throughout Germany together with general mobilisation, and then not the civil courts, but courts-martial would have the power of decision. . . .' [11]

If, however, Germany were attacked by another power, the social-democrats, Bebel declared at the Erfurt congress, were as ready as any other party to defend the country. If Russia, 'the incarnation of cruelty and barbarism, the enemy of all human culture', should attack Germany, 'we are as much and more interested than those who are ruling Germany and we shall oppose the aggressor. . . . If then we should fight side by side with those who today are our enemies, we would do this not so as to save them and their political and social order, but so as to save Germany, that is ourselves, and to free our soil from a barbarian who is the greatest enemy of our endeavours and whose victory would mean our defeat as social-democrats. . . .' [12] Words such as these, pronounced as early as 1891, were to have fatal consequences nearly a quarter of a century later when a Russian army penetrated into Germany. There is little doubt, on the other hand, that even with these utterances Bebel was much closer to the German masses than many intellectuals who were dreaming of a general strike and revolution.

BEBEL was on equally firm ground when he declined to use the weapon of the general strike to unhinge bourgeois society. He steadfastly maintained that the task of the SPD was to fight for concrete rights which were vital to the working class. If, for example, an attempt

[10] *Der Hochverrats-Prozess wider Liebknecht, Bebel, Hepner*, p. 546.
[11] *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der SPD, abgehalten zu Mannheim vom 23. bis 29 September 1906* (Berlin, 1906), pp. 240–41.
[12] *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der SPD, abgehalten zu Erfurt*, p. 285.

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was made to abolish the universal franchise, then SPD resistance could reckon with a good deal of sympathy in bourgeois circles. 'Apart from that, we possess far more power when defending a right that we have had for decades than when we want to conquer a new right.' If the authorities violated the right to form trade unions, to hold meetings or found political associations, and perhaps if the question of eliminating the Prussian three-class franchise became acute, then the weapon of the general strike might be used.[13] What Bebel advocated was a defensive, not an offensive strategy; it was not a strategy in the fight for socialism, but in defence of certain democratic rights. Quite logically, he was prepared to support all genuine liberal demands put forward by the representatives of the bourgeoisie. 'That we have done in the past and will do in the future, and it will be entirely agreeable to me and to my party comrades if we are often put into the position of giving support to demands of the bourgeois parties. . . .'[14]

Yet Bebel was against coalitions with bourgeois parties because he was convinced 'that not the social-democrats, but the bourgeois parties would be the gainers and we the losers. It is a political law that, wherever the Right and the Left combine, the Left loses and the Right gains. . . .'[15] Although this may not be a political law, Bebel's maxim was in many ways confirmed by the experiences of the SPD after 1918 when it formed coalition governments with non-socialist parties. When the principles of the party were at stake Bebel would not make any concessions, not even to attract voters. When the Bavarian social-democrats under Georg von Vollmar, who had to work in a country still largely agrarian, urged that the wishes of the peasants should be taken into account, Bebel replied in 1894 at the Frankfurt SPD congress: 'consideration for the peasants and similar backward elements must not influence us; if the peasants will not be convinced we need not bother about them. Their prejudices, their ignorance, their limitations must not induce us to relax any of our principles. You [turning to the Bavarian delegates] are not the representatives of the Bavarian peasants, but of the intelligent industrial workers, and you have to preserve our programme pure and undiluted. If the peasants do not come to us as it is, the difficulties of the time will teach them to think anyway. . . .'[16] With this basic attitude, the SPD—under Bebel as well as after him—was never able to penetrate into circles outside the industrial working classes, nor did it ever show any interest in the problems of land reform and dividing the large estates of the nobility. The party remained a working-class party and could not gain a majority.

[13] *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der SPD, abgehalten zu Jena vom 17. bis 23. September 1905* (Berlin, 1905), pp. 308–09.
[14] Bebel to Haussmann, 7 October 1909; quoted by Fricke, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 1960, p. 289.
[15] *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der SPD, abgehalten zu Magdeburg vom 18. bis 24. September 1910* (Berlin, 1910), p. 252.
[16] *Protokoll über die Verhandlungen des Parteitages der SPD, abgehalten zu Frankfurt vom 21. bis 27. Oktober 1894* (Berlin, 1894), p. 118.

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Bebel was also determined to ward off any attack on the principles of the party from within. In his opinion, these came chiefly from Eduard Bernstein and his supporters on the right wing, who aimed at transforming the SPD into a party of social reform. That, Bebel wrote, amounted to giving up the name of Social-Democrats and becoming Social-Liberals, and this he could not support 'because I cannot go along with it as it is contrary to all my convictions'. Those who in truth no longer belonged to social-democracy should leave the party. Some months later he still believed that a reconciliation was impossible and a breach with the reformers inevitable.[17] Yet here Bernstein saw more clearly than Bebel. The SPD had never been a revolutionary party, as the Bolsheviks and Rosa Luxemburg's Polish Socialist party were. In reality, no principles were at stake between Bebel and Bernstein; hence a compromise was possible, and no breach occurred. For the later development of the SPD Bernstein's theories proved more important than the slogans of the past, which dated from the years of struggle with the police and of persecution under the law against the socialists. In Bebel's time the SPD remained a party of revolutionary slogans and reformist practices and tried above all to improve the lot of the working classes within the existing society. With the outbreak of the first world war the radical slogans of the past, too, were assigned to limbo.

HOW little Bebel was at home in the world of the east European revolutionary parties is shown by a curious intermezzo which took place in 1904–5. The faction fights among the Russian and Polish socialists occupied the attention of the International Socialist Bureau and of the International Socialist Congress which met in Amsterdam in 1904. While, in addition to the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, the Russian Socialist-Revolutionaries were accepted as members of the International, the same privilege was refused to the Jewish Socialist *Bund* which had its main strength in Russian Poland. There two rival Polish parties were fighting each other: Pilsudski's Polish Socialist party, the PPS, and Rosa Luxemburg's Social-Democratic party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania. Representatives of Ukrainian, Latvian, and Armenian socialist groups had also appeared in Amsterdam. The chaotic conditions in the Russian revolutionary movement at a time of growing internal tension and Russian defeats at Japanese hands made it appear doubtful whether the revolutionary forces could ever be co-ordinated for attacks upon the Tsarist regime, which at this juncture were more promising than ever before. Hence the leaders of the Socialist International tried to bring about a reconciliation among the warring factions. In October 1904 Bebel wrote to the Menshevik leader Axelrod and suggested that 'those Russian socialist factions which are so close to each other that a common cooperation is possible' should meet at

[17] *Victor Adler, Briefwechsel mit August Bebel und Karl Kautsky*, pp. 268–69, 309.

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a conference to discuss measures of cooperation and unification. Among these groups Bebel mentioned the followers of Lenin, the Jewish *Bund*, the Poles, and the Latvians. Above all, however, Axelrod's friends should agree to the plan, as Bebel did not want to start an enterprise which was 'utterly hopeless'. Neither the participation of the Socialist-Revolutionaries nor of the PPS was envisaged, probably because the objections of the other Russian and Polish groups were considered too strong.[18]

Yet even in this truncated form the plan did not prosper. At the end of 1904 Bebel reported that Axelrod, whose participation was vital, was 'curiously reticent, half yes, half no'. He did not want to take the initiative, but was willing to come if Bebel called the conference. The latter believed 'that the attempt must be made to bring the hostile parties together, for everything about which they quarrel and disagree is mere rubbish (*Quark*) compared with what is in practice at stake and what should be worked for. If these people cannot now master the situation they are acting irresponsibly. . . .' At the beginning of 1905 Bebel tried to arrange that the conference should meet in Zürich in the course of January and asked the Austrian socialist leader Victor Adler to arrange for the invitation of certain Polish and Ukrainian groups. But Axelrod still objected to the participation of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the PPS on grounds which Bebel considered very threadbare (*besonders fadenscheinig*), and soon also to the invitation of Lenin.[19] Rosa Luxemburg, on the other hand, was violently opposed to Adler as a mediator because he protected the PPS, and she reproached Axelrod for consenting at all to the summoning of the conference. In her opinion, Bebel and the Germans had not 'the faintest idea' about the differences among the Russian parties and were inclined to 'agreements made out of thin air'. Amidst this confusion, Bebel had to give up the whole plan.

But this was not the end of his attempts at mediation. A few weeks later he once more wrote, this time only to the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks, that the split had caused 'great dismay and lively disapproval' among the socialists of other countries; he hoped it would be possible, in view of the developments inside Russia, 'to find common ground for the struggle against the common enemy'. The rival parties should accept the decision of an arbitration court of five which would meet in Zürich under Bebel's chairmanship.[20] This time the Mensheviks accepted Bebel's suggestion, but Lenin refused: in his opinion, the split in the Russian party was a fact that could not be decided upon by foreign comrades, but only by a Russian party congress. Lenin's refusal

[18] D. Geyer, 'Die russische Parteispaltung im Urteil der deutschen Sozialdemokratie', *International Review of Social History* (Amsterdam), 1958, pp. 418–20.

[19] Bebel to Adler, 28 December 1904, 4 and 8 January 1905: *Victor Adler, Briefwechsel mit August Bebel und Karl Kautsky*, pp. 446, 452.

[20] Luxemburg to Axelrod, 9 January 1905; Bebel to the Mensheviks, 3 February 1905: Geyer, *loc. cit.*, pp. 426–27, 430.

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was upheld by other Bolshevik representatives abroad, who referred to the views held by the local groups in Russia which were allegedly repudiating all attempts at reconciliation and demanding the summoning of a party congress.[21] When the congress met in London at the end of April 1905 it was a Bolshevik affair, while the Mensheviks simultaneously held their own counter-conference at Geneva. The outcome was a deepening of the split, the creation of separate organisations of the two groups. Bebel commented acidly to Axelrod: 'It must be said openly that the influence of the emigrés on the Russian movement, effective as it has once been, is at the moment merely disastrous and damaging. . . . It is a case which has never occurred previously that, in the midst of a revolution, the leaders abroad manage to hold a congress which ends in the exacerbation of the conflicts. Such an action amounts almost to unscrupulousness and complete incapacity to be the leaders of the movement. . . .' Bebel was now determined not to 'lift a finger any more in the whole affair unless the hostile parties put forward a *common* proposal'; he thought it ridiculous to thrust upon them the idea of 'a conciliation conference with which the parties in question will have nothing to do'.[22] The plan was never revived.

Bebel's approach to these involved factional struggles, partly political, partly personal, was that of common sense. He was the leader of a democratic mass party in which such conflicts were openly discussed and if need be voted upon, but did not lead to splits. To him the issues at stake between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, between them and the different Polish groups, and among the latter, must have appeared incomprehensible and due to personal animosities. In a letter to Adler he wrote: 'The split among the Poles is as *unqualifizierbar* (irrational, impossible to define) as that among the Russians. . . .'[23] Nobody at that time could foretell that the splits were destined to make world history.

During his life-time Bebel was venerated by the German workers 'like a king', as Helmuth von Gerlach put it in 1909; 'no one is loved so fervently by so many as he is'.[24] Yet half a century after his death it seems difficult to recapture that spirit. His writings seem curiously old-fashioned, a period piece rather than living socialist thought. Clearly, it was the man that counted, his honesty, his sincere convictions, his courage, his faculty of keeping together the party and invigorating it with his spirit. None of the later SPD leaders—neither Friedrich Ebert, nor Otto Wels, nor any of the post-war leaders—possessed these gifts. None of them was so universally recognised and respected, none so deservedly popular as Bebel.

[21] O. Pjatnizki, *Aufzeichnungen eines Bolschewiks* (Berlin, 1930), pp. 88–89.
[22] Geyer, *loc. cit.*, pp. 437, 440–41.
[23] Bebel to Adler, 30 May 1905: *Victor Adler, Briefwechsel mit August Bebel und Karl Kautsky*, p. 455.
[24] Quoted by Fricke, *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 1963, p. 1047.

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# ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE USSR

*Alexander Vucinich*

IN the Soviet Union ethnography is treated both as a historical discipline and as a science. As history, it is concerned with the unique events which give each culture its distinctive character and individuality; as science it deals with universal processes of the evolution of culture. As historian, the ethnographer deals with the diversity of cultures; as scientist, he tries to discover the universal aspects of culture and culture change.

The Soviet idea of ethnography as a science has its roots in the nineteenth-century theory of cultural evolution. But Soviet scholars, although they have incorporated a substantial part of this theory into their thinking, do not consider themselves its modern representatives. While claiming that the classical evolutionist theory comes close to providing 'a full understanding of the gradual development of human societies', they contend that it is too schematic and that it treats culture as a high-level abstraction rather than a historical phenomenon.[1] As M. G. Levin wrote in 1961, 'The evolutionist school in ethnography, which represented a significant and progressive stage in the development of our science, focused its attention on the general growth of culture or its specific elements, but it tended to ignore the human dimension of cultural phenomena and the concrete histories of individual societies'.[2] In similar vein, S. A. Tokarev said, 'For its time, evolutionism was an advanced development in bourgeois science. To Soviet ethnography, which has long ago overcome the narrowness of evolutionism, the fundamental regularities in the historical process are not the end of scientific inquiry but a first step . . . in the understanding of historical reality'.[3]

The blending of nineteenth-century evolutionism with Marxism was achieved long before the birth of the Soviet Union. In the *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Engels amplified and expanded Marx's views on the universal principles and stages of social development by superimposing upon them the evolutionary ideas of the American scholar Lewis H. Morgan. Engels asserted that the future accumulation of scientific knowledge would undoubtedly lead to some revision of Morgan's ideas, but that his grand scheme of universal evolution would never be seriously challenged. Having accepted Morgan on this high authority, Soviet ethnographers have been unwavering in their admiration for his contributions. The current Soviet view of Morgan is best expressed in Tokarev's statement that new generations of

1 'F. Engels i problemy sovremennoi etnografii', *Sovetskaia etnografiia*, no. 6, 1959, p. 5.

2 M. G. Levin in *Sovetskaia etnografiia*, no. 1, 1961, p. 21.

3 S. A. Tokarev in *Vestnik istorii mirovoi kultury*, no. 3, 1958, p. 189.

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scholars can refine and amplify his general conclusions but cannot fundamentally change them.

Soviet ethnographers have adopted, at least in principle, the key conceptual and methodological components of classical evolutionism. First of all, they believe that cultural evolution is universal and that it proceeds along one, not several, paths. Like their nineteenth-century predecessors, they consider the study of the origin of culture, society, or individual peoples a most challenging academic task. Such terms as 'sociogenesis', 'anthropogenesis', and 'ethnogenesis' suggest the broad and interrelated areas they have investigated. Also in the tradition of classical evolutionism, Soviet ethnographers have sought eagerly for answers to questions about the origins of various components of culture, such as totemism, exogamy, property, religion, family, and art.

Like Edward Tylor, L. H. Morgan, James Frazer, and other stalwarts of classical evolutionism, Soviet ethnographers make extensive methodological use of cultural survivals—alleged relics of times past—to 'reconstruct' earlier phases of social development. But here they apply the old Spencerian twist: the survivals are used not to check the validity of the proposed evolutionary scheme but to illustrate it.

The comparative method is also widely used. Its authority is not unchallenged, as in the days of Spencer, Tylor and Morgan; but it can be and is used as a convenient device for reaching expedient conclusions. As in the nineteenth century, the mere placing of a society at a particular point on the scale of social evolution purports to explain much about the complexity of the basic components of its culture. Thus B. D. Grekov, the famous Soviet historian, identified the Eastern Slav society of the seventh century as being at the same level of development as that of the Iroquois at the time of the flowering of their confederate system of government. This 'identification' enabled Grekov to date the Russian state from the seventh century. He relied exclusively on a highly tentative evolutionary hypothesis (the period of 'military democracy' in the evolution of the Iroquois society) to establish an unknown historical quantity (Eastern Slav statehood in the seventh century).

DESPITE its heavy reliance on classical evolutionism, Soviet ethnographic theory has been a dynamic force and has acquired a distinctive individuality and complexity. It has been an open theoretical system sensitive to the need for expanding the field of subjects conducive to ethnographic analysis, and susceptible to the more subtle influences of Western cultural-anthropological thought.

The expansion of the evolutionist theory has followed three main lines. In the first place, it has been integrated into, and modified by, historical materialism. As a result, cultural evolution as viewed by Soviet ethnographers consists of two distinct processes: the 'quantitative' changes within established social systems, which are gradual; and the 'qualitative' changes, which mark the inception of new social systems

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and assume revolutionary proportions. Qualitative changes are interpreted not as social responses to individual inventions, but as basic shifts within the total productive systems of societies. In his efforts to consolidate the threads of the cultural past, the Soviet ethnographer relies upon the comparative method of the evolutionary school and the dialectical method of the Hegelian-Marxian tradition.

A synthesis of ethnographic and archaeological data has provided another important avenue for the expansion of traditional evolutionist theory. In dividing the grand line of cultural evolution into three major epochs, Morgan relied primarily upon ethnographic data; Soviet scholars, on the other hand, have consistently sought to give their scheme of evolutionary stages an archaeological, as well as an ethnographic, basis. There has been a great deal of work—and a smouldering academic battle—in this area of research, but the problem of periodisation is still far from settled. M. O. Kosven, noted for his interest in coordinating relevant archaeological and ethnographic data, recognises three major periods in the evolution of ancient society: (1) the period of the primeval herd (corresponding to Morgan's ' savagery '); (2) the period of kinship-dominated society (corresponding to Morgan's ' barbarism ', and subdivided into matriarchal and patriarchal periods); and (3) the period of military democracy (corresponding to Morgan's transitional period from barbarism to civilisation). Kosven's periodisation, however, has not been extensively debated, and has been accepted only by a few.

Despite widespread demands for a systematic coordination of ethnographic and archaeological data, Soviet scholars tend to base their sociological generalisations of historic relevance primarily on ethnographic data. One has only to leaf through Kosven's *Essays in the History of Primeval Culture*, or V. K. Nikolskii's *History of Primeval Society*, to see how wide is the scope for interpreting prehistoric societies in terms of generalisations derived from ethnographic data—data, for instance, from contemporary tribal and peasant societies or from societies that disappeared after ethnographic studies were made. Soviet scholars have done little generalising solely from archaeological data, despite the fact that their excavations have been of gigantic proportions and have been conducted by scientific methods. ' It must be admitted,' says S. N. Zamiatnin, ' that we pay little attention to broader historical interpretations of accumulated [archaeological] information. This is particularly true for the study of the economic history of Quaternary man. In the West there is a whole series of basic studies dealing with Paleolithic economy—to name only the works of G. de Mortillet, W. J. Sollas, W. Soergel, K. Lindner, and J. G. D. Clark . . . At the same time, there is not a single study in the Russian language devoted specifically to this

[4] Efforts to present somewhat different evolutionary stages are presented in Iu. I. Semenov, *Voznikovenie chelovecheskogo obshchestva* (1962); and A. I. Pershits in *Sovetskaia etnografiia*, no. 4, 1955, pp. 18–32.

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problem.'[5] Soviet scholars have generalised much *into*, but very little *from*, archaeological data.

The third modification of traditional evolutionary thought has come from significant efforts to combine the study of evolution, or the universal process of culture change, and history, or the unique events that have made any one society culturally distinct.

Soviet students of culture have been careful to distinguish themselves from the non-Marxist historical schools in ethnography; they have analysed and criticised the different epistemological foundations of each school. In the methodology of the *Kulturkreise* theory, propounded by Fritz Graebner and his numerous successors, they see a specific application of the theory of knowledge advanced by the neo-Kantian school of Heinrich Rickert and Wilhelm Windelband. These philosophers regard history as a special kind of science based on particularising logic, and therefore qualitatively different from the natural sciences, which are based on generalising logic. Soviet critics argue that the acceptance of this view led Graebner and his followers into two gross errors; indeterminism and agnosticism—the former standing for the denial of the existence of key causes of social change, and the latter for the dogmatic acceptance of the Kantian principle of the unknowability of the level of reality identified as the thing in itself.[6] An indeterministic orientation is attributed to Wilhelm Schmidt, the founder of the 'cultural-historical school' in ethnography; and both Graebner and Schmidt are considered victims of the influence of the antiquated ideas of nineteenth-century ethnography, which attached more weight to geographical diversity than to evolutionary unity in the development of culture.[7]

Similar, but much milder, criticisms are directed at the American historical school in ethnography, founded by Franz Boas and worked into a philosophically sophisticated system of thought by such eminent anthropologists as Robert Lowie and Alfred Kroeber.[8] To this school, ethnography is 'history or nothing', an orientation that differs substantively from Soviet views. Despite its uncompromising anti-evolutionism and its neo-Kantian orientation, Boas's school has received comparatively favourable treatment from scholarly circles in the Soviet Union. Boas has been credited with showing by personal example the value of meticulous fieldwork and minute descriptions of cultural data and the

[5] S. N. Zamiatnin in L. P. Potapov, ed., *Problemy istorii pervobytnogo obshchestva* (Moscow, 1960), p. 81.

[6] 'F. Engels i problemy sovremennoi etnografii', pp. 5–6.

[7] Soviet ethnographers recognise that the 'Vienna School of Ethnology' with historical roots in the ideas of Graebner and Schmidt, has abandoned the *Kulturkreise* theory; they claim, however, that it has been corrupted by anthropological influences from England and the United States (S. A. Tokarev, *op. cit.* p. 192).

[8] 'American ethnographers have resolved the basic philosophical question of the relationship between the historical and logical components of knowledge—between history and theory in the study of society—in the spirit of Rickert and Windelband: they have arbitrarily destroyed the historical and logical unity of knowledge and have divided the single process of knowledge into two sciences—"history" and "science"' (Iu. P. Averkieva in *Sovetskaia etnografiia*, no. 6, 1959, p. 181).

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importance of the study of native languages. Such concepts as 'ecological types' and 'culture areas' have been used to good effect by Soviet ethnographers.[9] Levin and his associates found the mapping of ecological types and culture areas in Siberia of essential heuristic value for the preparation of the *Ethnographic Atlas of Siberia*, which is a truly impressive document. Although these concepts have their origin in the anti-evolutionist branch of American ethnographic thought, Soviet ethnographers have been able to make them an integral part of their grand theory of culture change.

IN Soviet ethnography, the concept of 'ecological type' denotes cultural similarities over wide non-contiguous areas that can be explained by similarities in physical habitat and by the level of evolutionary development, each of these being an important variable. Some cultural similarities between the Samoyed groups of the Taymir and groups of the Chukchi and the Koryak in north-eastern Asia have been explained by similarities in physical habitat of the tundra and the same level of internal social development as measured by the evolutionary yardstick. The culture areas, on the other hand, designate contiguous territories inhabited by peoples with similarities in culture that cannot be accounted for in ecological or evolutionary, but only in historical, terms—that is, in terms of the diffusion of culture elements or complexes. It has been found, at least in some instances, that the comparatively recent culture areas, as defined in terms of ethnographic material, correspond almost exactly to Neolithic culture areas delineated on the basis of archaeological material.

These two concepts have proved valuable to Soviet ethnographers in ethnogenetic studies, in the preparation of atlases, and in efforts to explain the growth of such unique Siberian culture complexes as reindeer herding and shamanism. They have, in a way, reconciled the evolutionism of Morgan with the historical views of Boas, and they have provided a justification for giving equal emphasis to the study of internal and external causes of social change.

In working out the details of the theoretical edifice of ethnographic historicism, Soviet scholars have been particularly critical of the sociological orientations of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. These orientations, separated by fine and often almost invisible lines, are united by their negative attitude towards historical approaches in ethnography and by their primary concern with the structure of tribal and peasant societies. Both emphasise the study of the current functions of various institutional complexes and both ignore the question of the origins, historical antecedents, and general evolution of those complexes. Both, according to Soviet critics, have their philosophical origins in the

[9] M. G. Levin and N. N. Cheboksarov in *Sovetskaia etnografiia*, no. 4, 1955, pp. 3–17. See also M. G. Levin, *Ethnic Origins of the Peoples of Northeastern Asia* (Toronto University Press, 1963), p. 5; and A. A. Formozov, *Etnokulturnye oblasti na territorii evropeiskoi chasti SSSR v Kamennom veke* (Moscow, 1959), p. 12.

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Marburg school of neo-Kantianism—the school that championed the shift in the study of culture from historical origins and events to non-historical structures and functions.

Despite their attacks on the sociological school in ethnography, Soviet scholars have actually made the concept of social structure an essential part of their historical orientation. In every society they recognise two levels of reality: a content and a form. The content of a society is its structure, the architectural principles of its integration. To understand the structure of a society, the scholar must go beyond a consideration of the relatively brief historical developments and locate the precise place of the structure in the scheme of evolution. It is not every institutional component of a society that forms a part of its structure, but only those that determine its place in the evolutionary scheme. The structural components are stable over relatively long periods, and as such they are susceptible to comparative study and scientific generalisation. The non-structural components of a society —its form—are the result of an interplay of two influences: geographical and historical. They show the cultural uniqueness and individuality of a society but not its place on the evolutionary scale.

The content-form dichotomy is helpful to Soviet ethnographers in two ways: it gives logical unity to the evolutionary and historical orientations in ethnography; and it makes ethnography both a science and a history, a generalising and a descriptive discipline. They praise Julian Steward, the leading American student of culture change, for pointing out the logical, methodological, and philosophical shortcomings of the ideographic orientation; but criticise him for his unwillingness to climb to the very summit of the nomothetic orientation. He searches, they claim, for limited regularities in culture change and not for universal evolutionary laws. Steward made a serious and impressive effort to give evolution the validity of an *a posteriori* concept, depicting regularities and continuities limited in space and time and derived from historical facts. But to Soviet ethnographers evolution is an *a priori* concept, not limited in space and time and essentially independent of historical events.[10]

AS a generalising science, Soviet ethnography is inseparable from the official Soviet philosophy of history, and it thus belongs more to the realm of ideology than to the domain of the theoretical sciences. This is particularly true inasmuch as social structure, as a methodological and a substantive concept, is formulated and defined *for* the scholars rather than *by* them. When a Soviet ethnographer studies the Chukchi, for example, he knows in advance that the structure of Chukchi society is officially defined so that it does not differ essentially from the structure of Soviet society of which it is a constituent part. The primacy and sacredness of socialist property, the law of remuneration in accordance

[10] For a detailed Soviet critique of Steward's theory, see Iu. P. Averkieva, *loc. cit.*, pp. 180–88.

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with work, the identification of the essential interests of the state with those of society, scientific optimism, and atheism are among the values that give meaning and unity to both Chukchi and Soviet societies. These values do not have to be extracted from ethnographic data by a trained scholar; they are promulgated as part of the official Soviet ideology and are given a degree of theoretical sophistication by Soviet philosophers.

This does not mean, however, that the Soviet ethnographer ignores social structure altogether. Many detailed studies have been written, for example, on the structural changes in Siberian societies under the Soviet regime. But one of the principal duties of Soviet ethnographers is to study the so-called survivals from the pre-Soviet social regimes. They are concerned with two distinct types of survivals, which may be conveniently called 'evolutionary' and 'historical'. The evolutionary survivals are dysfunctional relics from the more distant past and are primarily of academic and philosophical interest. The word *n'ev-tumgyt* in Chukchi kinship terminology is viewed as an evolutionary survival; it is often used to illustrate the existence of group marriage in an early stage of social evolution and to reinforce the Marxian philosophy of history. Historical survivals, on the other hand, are conceived as the functional relics of a more recent, but pre-Soviet, period. Clan exogamy, bride price, patriarchal authority in the family, and the isolation of women from public life are examples of historical survivals that are found in one degree or another in Soviet Asian republics or provinces. These survivals work against the integrating values of the socialist social structure. The interest in them is not purely academic; they must be detected, analysed, and conceptualised in order to be controlled, weakened, or eliminated.

One of the vital functions of the Soviet ethnographer is to provide the state authorities with reliable intelligence on the nature, scope, and social significance of religious behaviour in Russian rural communities, in Soviet Moslem nations, or in the small societies of northern Siberia. His task is to guard the structural principles of Soviet society by recognising and interpreting informal groups, latent functions of individual institutions, and myths that show the unplanned and undirected side of the Soviet universe. However, in carrying out this vital practical assignment, the Soviet ethnographer is constrained to accept a primary value judgment: the official concept of progress. The idea of progress stands in the way of a sound study of culture not because it has no intrinsic rationalist value but because in the Soviet Union it is an ideological precept and not a topic of scholarly debate. The indices for measuring social and cultural progress are handed down to ethnographers by political authorities and official ideologists.

The ethnographic studies of social and cultural change since the October Revolution have been particularly impaired by the dogmatic adherence of scholars to the official idea of progress. On the other hand, the studies of cultural change before 1917—particularly in Siberian

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societies, where Soviet scholars have done their most substantial work—are virtually unmarred by the official dogma of progress. In these studies, the ethnographer makes his job interesting and academically respectable by leaving the idea of progress to official ideologists and philosophers and by concentrating on the details of historical development. He has done commendable work in ethnogenesis, that flourishing discipline concerned with the ethnic origin of various Soviet national groups.

Even when, in his study of pre-Soviet social change, the ethnographer does face the idea of progress, he is more flexible and demonstrably less dogmatic than in his study of Soviet social realities. Because he studies both evolutionary uniformities and historical diversities of change, he does not view progress as an automatic and mathematically precise unfolding of the grand idea of intellectual and moral perfection. History, he admits, has recorded periods of stagnation and even retrogression as well as periods of universal advance. He insists, however, that these historical twists and turns add up to an evolutionary progress; only by surveying the whole course of history, and by comparing each epoch with the preceding one, can we discern the steady progress of culture in all its aspects.[11]

THE Soviet blend of evolution and history is not a consistent and integrated system of thought. While in their descriptive studies Soviet ethnographers tend to be historians, in their theoretical discussions they are primarily evolutionists. This is true despite the fact that they classify all their studies as historical and find little use for the term evolution in its non-biological denotations. Instead, they recognise two kinds of history: universal social history, divided into definite stages, and the unique histories of individual societies. They claim that the basic weakness of Julian Steward's theory of culture change is that it gives primacy to history over evolution—that it treats historical data as the factor limiting and controlling the level of scientifically valid abstractions. To them, historical data do not determine the level of generalisation that is relevant to culture change; they merely express the working of general evolutionary laws within the context of individual societies and the local variations within the universal pattern of cultural evolution.

It would be a gross error, however, to assume that Soviet theory conceives history only as a drama of evolution, a concrete expression of the grand process of culture change. Regarded in principle as external manifestations of evolution, historical happenings are also admitted to have an influence on the tempo and rhythm of the evolutionary process. According to E. S. Makarian: 'It is important to bear in mind that the Marxian historical conception cannot be reduced to a mere study of universal history as a smooth evolutionary succession of various stages of development, through which all societies must pass.

[11] N. I. Konrad, in *Vestnik istorii mirovoi kultury*, no. 2, 1961. pp. 26–27.

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The universal regularity of the development of mankind through specific stages must not be understood dogmatically; it must be treated as a dominant historical tendency whose actual manifestations are influenced by the concrete conditions of each society and by its unique history. The best example is provided by those peoples of the Soviet Union who have entered the socialist stage without having passed through the stage of capitalism.' [12]

The ideas of Ruth Benedict and her followers have been singled out for attack by leading Soviet students of culture. This criticism deserves special attention for it illuminates, if indirectly, several of the chief theories in Soviet ethnography. Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*, published in 1934, was an effort to penetrate into the depths of culture by blending the historical approach of Franz Boas with *Gestalt* psychology and Spengler's concept of cultural morphologies. Soviet ethnographers have been particularly vehement in their attacks on Benedict's views on culture patterns or configurations, the relationship of culture to personality, and cultural relativism.

Cultures, Ruth Benedict insisted, are not mechanical aggregates of discrete elements, but integrated wholes, irreducible to elementary components. Each culture achieves, or tends to achieve, an over-all integration, a *Gestalt*, pattern, or configuration. The values selected by each culture for special emphasis account for its uniqueness and originality. The dominant values of a culture are the key to the understanding of the very essence of its life and the innermost meaning of its human relations. Soviet ethnographers insist, on the contrary, that values are not the structural elements or content of a culture, but its form; instead of explaining a culture, it is said, these values need a more basic and more significant explanation themselves. They may explain the historical individuality of a culture, but they fail to show its more basic position on the scale of evolution. The weakness of this approach, Makarian insists, is that 'it does not view local social and cultural systems as special manifestations of a unitary process . . . but as discrete, non-repetitive formations, each expressing a completely unique orientation in the development of human culture'.[13] Benedict's idea of culture patterns is rejected as a product of idealistic philosophy and hence incompatible with the basic tenets of historical materialism. It is also rejected as part of an orientation that considers the study of individual cultures—rather than culture in its common human endowments—as the primary task of the ethnographer. Soviet scholars have been unwilling to see Benedict's emphasis on the study of individual cultures as a necessary step towards a more successful and penetrating study of culture in general. They are correct, however, in noting that her orientation is not only anti-evolutionist but also ahistorical—that it overlooks the breeding grounds of change and the shifting of emphasis from one cluster of institutions and values to another.

[12] E. S. Makarian in *Voprosy filosofii*, no. 8, 1963, p. 57.
[13] Ibid. p. 53.

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Ruth Benedict was one of the first modern scholars to point out the fruitfulness of a systematic ethnographic study of personality. She claimed, in essence, that the same values which give a culture its over-all unity and uniqueness are the values which play the dominant role in moulding a raw human being into a culturally articulated personality. Personality, therefore, is viewed as a reflection of dominant values and, in a way, as an important repository of cultural data generally ignored by traditional anthropologists. Most American cultural anthropologists have acknowledged the importance of the ethnographic study of personality, even though most of them do not subscribe to Benedict's way of going about it. The usual criticisms are that her theory provides for a study of the 'ideal' rather than the 'typical' personality of a society, and that it views personality only as a passive reflection of values and overlooks its role as an active agent of culture change. British anthropologists have been more cautious in accepting personality as an object of ethnographic inquiry: they have generally felt that the concept of personality should be given more precision by social psychologists before it is used by ethnographers.

SOVIET ethnographers have their own reasons for rejecting Benedict's culture-and-personality theory. They are particularly opposed to psychological characterisations of culture; they feel that her theory reduces cultural determinants of personality to psychological terms, to value-laden norms of approved behaviour.[14] They suspect that she advocates an explanation of non-material culture in its own terms rather than in terms of more basic conditions that are at the same time external —in Durkheim's sense—and subject to universal laws of culture development. They are also quick to point out that Benedict's approach has led her to pass psychiatric judgment on various cultures and to attribute symptoms of mental illness to some of them. While these criticisms may have some relevance, they are essentially a mixture of ideological precommitments and theoretical oversimplifications.

The idea of psychological lag is another important reason for the Soviet rejection of Benedict's theory of personality, although it is not explicitly claimed to be important by Soviet ethnographers. They say that the dominant components of a culture—the structure of its social and economic base—may change faster than personality traits, and that this is particularly obvious in times of crisis and revolutionary upheaval. Just as there are what we have called evolutionary survivals and historical survivals, there are also psychological survivals. Personality, they say, is not necessarily a true product of the internalisation of the values of a culture. The Soviet ethnographer still heeds Stalin's forceful reminder of 1933: 'In its development, the mentality of man lags behind his actual condition. In status the members of collective farms are no longer individual farmers, but collectivists; but their mentality is still

[14] Iu. P. Averkieva in *Sovetskaia etnografiia*, no. 4, 1962, p. 9.

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the old one—that of owners of private property'.[15] The Soviet ethnographer has surrendered the task of defining the 'ideal personality' of Soviet culture to official ideologists, and has accepted as one of his important tasks the study of psychological hangovers of bygone days. Occasionally, he does write about the new man of Soviet culture, but he is careful to avoid making any relevant theoretical formulations.[16]

Ruth Benedict's interpretation of culture patterns—her emphasis on values and psychological characterisations of individual cultures—has provided a basis for the modern theory of cultural relativity. The essential differences between cultures, according to this view, stem not from their comparable positions in a universal evolutionary scheme, but from their discrete, non-comparable patterns. Each culture is viewed as a system of values built around a unique segment of 'the arc of potential human purposes and motivations'. This choice of a segment must be made, she argues, because 'the great arc along which all the possible human behaviours are distributed is far too immense and too full of contradictions for any one culture to utilise even any considerable portion of it'.[17] The credo of cultural relativism is that each culture has its own 'frame of reference', its own hierarchy of values, and that each can be best understood if studied from its own vantage point. In the West, cultural relativism has been received with mixed feelings: some have hailed it as the cornerstone of a reliable and meaningful ethnography, and others have attacked it for not giving sufficient emphasis to universal culture and to the common denominators of humanity. In the thinking of Soviet ethnographers, there is no room for cultural relativism —or, as they label it, the theory of the equivalence of local cultures. This position, of course, is a logical result of their acceptance of universal and unilinear evolution as the law of social change. Cultural relativism is based on a categorical rejection of the idea of progress as an index of evolution; but for Soviet ethnographers, as we have seen, the identification of evolution and progress is a scientific law. They describe culture change in Moslem communities in Central Asia, in the farming settlements of European Russia, and in the small ethnic groups of northern Siberia and the Pacific coast as *progressive* emulations of the way of life and cultural standards of the Russian urban population. The Chukchi, the Evenki, the Samoyed groups, and other non-Russians of Soviet Asia and the Caucasus, are encouraged to preserve the distinct forms of their cultures, but they are also told that their full integration into the more advanced socialist-urban culture is historically inevitable according to the general law of cultural evolution.

Soviet ethnographic theory is an amalgam of many components with distinct origins in and affinities with Western ethnographic thought.

[15] J. V. Stalin, *Problems of Leninism* (Moscow, 1947), p. 422.

[16] See, for example, L. A. Anokhina and M. N. Shmeleva in *Sovetskaia etnografiia*, no. 4, 1962, pp. 23–33.

[17] Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture* (New York, 1946), p. 219.

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Upon the evolutionary substratum—in which ideology flows freely along with scientific thought—Soviet students of culture have built a new and rather complex theory with many open ends, unsettled problems, and controversial areas. The over-all unity of this theory is neither philosophical nor logical but ideological. It is constantly expanding to embrace new areas of ethnographic interest—as shown, for example, by the emergence of kolkhoz ethnography and industrial ethnography. It helps the scholar to order his material and give it a broader academic and social significance, but it also has a limiting factor: it leads the student of culture across only those paths that are free of ideological and philosophical pitfalls. It does not reach every phase of ethnographic work, for there are broad areas of research which are handled in a purely descriptive, non-theoretical fashion, and which contain valuable raw data on the structure and dynamics of Soviet society. It is admitted, for example, that kolkhoz ethnography—the branch of ethnography concerned with social and cultural changes in the rural community—is still a wandering discipline unsupported by a body of theory. The ethnographic studies of kolkhoz life are little more than collections of raw material consisting of purely descriptive statements.[18] But these and other Soviet community studies are nevertheless an inexhaustible source of cultural data, and one that is virtually untapped by Western scholars. The work of Stephen and Ethel Dunn has shown the great value of this material when processed carefully and critically in the light of modern anthropological theory.[19] Soviet ethnographic studies also provide a particularly valuable basis—if only in the West—for reaching a better understanding of the unexpected results of directed change and of the forces which, though uncalled for by socialist designs, are strong enough to bend the structure and twist the form of Soviet society.

[18] S. A. Tokarev in *Vestnik istorii mirovoi kultury*, no. 2, 1958, p. 91.

[19] See particularly their 'Directed Culture Change in the Soviet Union: Some Soviet Studies', *American Anthropologist*, vol. 64, no. 2, 1962; 'The Great Russian Peasant: Culture Change or Cultural Development', *Ethnology*, vol. II, no. 3, 1963; 'Cultural Change: Central Asia', *I.C.R.S. Medical Reports*, January–March 1962; and 'The Transformation of Economy and Culture in the Soviet Union', *Arctic Anthropology*, vol. I, no. 2, 1963.

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# TRENDS IN SOVIET GEOGRAPHY

*George J. Demko*

GEOGRAPHY in the Soviet Union is an old and well developed discipline. Its roots reach far into pre-revolutionary Russia and are associated with the adventurous explorations of such men as V. I. Bering, Semyonov Tyan-Shansky, and N. M. Przhevalsky. Such pre-revolutionary scholars as D. N. Anuchin and V. V. Dokuchayev represent a more academic, if less glamourous, tradition of geographical enquiry. The All-Union Geographical Society of the USSR is a continuation of the Russian Geographical Society founded in St. Petersburg in 1845. Since that time the Society has been active in promoting expeditionary, research, and educational activities in the various fields of geography.

There is much evidence to indicate that geography occupies a position of importance among the academic disciplines in the Soviet Union today. In the years after the Revolution, geography underwent a rapid expansion. Today, twenty-seven universities in the Soviet Union have chairs of geography. There is a national institute of geography within the Soviet Academy of Sciences as well as a number of regional and republic institutes. The number of professional geographers in the Soviet Union today is nearly four thousand.[1] The relative importance of geography there might well be envied by geographers in the United States and Britain.

Geography in the Soviet Union is a more comprehensive discipline than it is in most Western countries. The specialisations of the discipline range from population geography to glaciology, and from hydrology to historical geography. The broad range of specialisations is best seen in the example of the Geography Faculty of Moscow University, the largest centre of geographic training in the Soviet Union. It has fourteen departments (kafedri) including physical geography, economic geography, glaciology and polar regions, soil geography, physical geography of foreign countries, economic geography of foreign countries, economic geography of socialist countries, integrated physical geography, geomorphology, hydrology, oceanography, climatology, biogeography, and cartography and geodesy. Within these fourteen departments are forty sub-divisions (kabineti). For example, within the kafedra of economic geography there are, among others, kabinets of statistical and population geography and industrial geography.

The hierarchy or order of geographic fields in the Soviet Union is somewhat complex. Generally, there are two main divisions, physical

[1] *Soviet Geography: Accomplishments and Tasks*, translated and published by the American Geographical Society, Occasional Publication No. 1 (New York, 1962).

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geography and economic geography. Within these, work can be centred on phenomena in general or within a regional context. For example, a geographer may specialise in the study of the earth's heat-water balance or the general climatology of various regions of the world. An economic geographer may concentrate on the study of urban population and cities, or he may direct his study of urban geography towards the special case of the United States.

The most heavily emphasised of the major divisions of the discipline is physical geography. This field encompasses a great number of specialisations which, in most Western countries, are either separate disciplines (i.e. oceanography) or are included in disciplines other than geography (i.e. hydrology and soils). In the Soviet Union a vast amount of excellent research in the natural and earth sciences is done by physical geographers.

Economic geography, although not so strongly developed as physical geography, has become a significant field of Soviet geography since the Revolution. Within the realm of economic geography are included such branches as political geography, urban geography, industrial geography, transport geography, and even cultural geography. In addition to this systematic sub-division of economic geography, there exists a division based on the politico-economic systems of the world's nations (i.e. the economic geography of socialist countries and the economic geography of capitalist countries.) One of the most persistent themes pursued by economic geographers has been the economic regionalisation of the Soviet Union. Economic regions have been delimited and re-delimited with the aim of finding the most rational system for the administration and utilisation of the country's resources.

THE amount of work and the number of studies done by Soviet geographers has been very great. The entire country has been covered in a series of regional studies and monographs, a project which might well be emulated in the United States and elsewhere. Comprehensive geographic atlases have been completed for the country as a whole and for many of the republics. The Soviet *Atlas of Agriculture* (1959) and the *Atlas of Irkutsk Oblast* (1963) are excellent examples of Soviet cartographic work. In the field of bibliographic collection, the geography series of *Referativny Zhurnal* represents one of the most comprehensive bibliographic sources of its kind.

Geographic research in the Soviet Union has a strong practical orientation. Very little work is done in the interest of pure science or as the outcome of sheer curiosity. One of the deans of Soviet geography writes: 'A distinctive characteristic of geography in the Soviet Union is its close ties with practical economic construction, with the planning of the economy's development.'[2] During my year of research in the

[2] Ibid. p. 32.

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geography faculty of Moscow University (1962–63), I had the opportunity to see the theses and research papers of students and faculty members, and the great bulk of this work was devoted to practical studies of the country's economy. Each summer student expeditions are organised and sent to particularly interesting or problematic regions of the country. These expeditions are carried on regularly until work on all aspects of the region has been completed and integrated into a comprehensive report. At present, the geography faculty of Moscow University is sponsoring summer expeditions to western Kazakhstan and the lower Volga region where students participate in the collection and analysis of data concerning climate, soils, rail and road services, and population.

In addition, the practical orientation of geographic research is strongly directed to the local region or republic. During my visits to geographic centres in Irkutsk, Tbilisi, and Kiev, it was evident that the research in each case was concerned with the solution of the main problems in each region. In Irkutsk, the geographers were engaged in the study of population, particularly labour resources, in eastern Siberia; there was also much work being done on resource utilisation and transportation with the object of planning further and more rapid economic development of the eastern regions. At the Institute of Geography in Tbilisi, Georgia, physical and economic geographers were in the process of gathering data to be used in a comprehensive atlas of the Georgian Republic. There were also a number of projects which proposed to examine the recent rural population shifts in the agricultural valleys of the republic. In addition, there is a great deal of research directed towards the climatological and biogeographical problems of the Caucasus. At the University of Kiev I noted an emphasis on soil geography and questions of agricultural land utilisation. The economic geographers of the university were engaged in a project to delimit the economic regions of the Ukraine to be used for planning purposes.

WITHIN the last decade there have been some significant shifts in emphasis in Soviet geography. Until recently, Soviet geographers have concentrated primarily on the collection of data for an inventory of the nation's resources or potential resources, including minerals, agricultural land, water, labour, etc. Regional monographs and studies by geographers have been characterised by encyclopedic descriptions and listings of the separate aspects of the economy and the physical environment. Yu. Saushkin, head of the Kafedra of Economic Geography at Moscow University, bemoans the same weakness in doctoral dissertations: 'Some dissertations seem to be mainly descriptive in character and do not suggest any new problems'.[3] I. P. Gerasimov, the director of the Institute of Geography in the Academy of Sciences, recognised the same problem when he wrote that the 'vast amount of factual data being accumulated in geographic studies in the USSR is still not being

[3] Yu. Saushkin, 'On the Subject-Matter of Doctoral Dissertations in Geography', *Soviet Geography: Review and Translation*, January 1963, p. 52.

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subjected in due measure to theoretic elaboration and generalisation'. He states further that 'one of the serious defects [of Soviet geography] is the lack of a sufficiently integrated approach'.[4] The recognition of this deficiency has led to a greatly increased number of problem-oriented studies, particularly by physical geographers.

Recently, a great deal of attention has been turned to the study of population. In August 1961 a conference on population geography was held in Riga, and in January 1962 an inter-departmental congress on population geography was held at Moscow University. The Moscow congress was particularly important in that it elevated the study of population to an important position among the specialised fields of geography; its proceedings were published in six volumes which spelled out for the first time the content, tasks, and position of the geographic study of population.[5] In addition, a population division was organised within the All-Union Geographic Society. My own work was conducted in the Kabinet of Population Geography at Moscow University, which, in addition to the Moscow branch of the Institute of Geography, is the main centre of research and training in population geography. The development of this speciality at Moscow University has attracted many Soviet students, including a number of graduate students from other universities where training in this field is not available.

The study of foreign areas, particularly capitalist and dependent countries, represents another recent trend in Soviet geography. The interest in dependent and under-developed countries coincides with the growing Soviet aid programme to such areas. Geographers are being taught the languages and trained to analyse the economic-physical problems peculiar to the countries of Africa and Asia in order that they may be able to participate in research and development programmes carried out in those areas. To date, most of this work has been done in other communist countries such as North Viet-Nam, Cuba, and China, but the expansion to the neutral underdeveloped countries is under way. Soviet geographers have already participated in research programmes in India and Guinea.

There has also been an increased interest recently in the study of capitalist countries, especially the United States. The belittling and vituperative attitude toward 'non-Marxist bourgeois geography' has been somewhat tempered in the past few years, and replaced to some degree by a more genuine interest in the research of Western geographers. In May 1961 an inter-departmental conference on the geography of capitalist countries was held at Moscow University. It examined the problems of studying these areas of the world and advocated more research. A resolution was adopted urging the establishment of a library of cartographic and research materials on capitalist countries

[4] I. P. Gerasimov, 'The Present Aims and Status of Soviet Geography', ibid. January–February 1960, p. 9.

[5] *Materiali Pervogo Mezhduvedomstvennogo Soveshchaniya po Geografii Naseleniya*, Vypusk 1–6 (Moscow-Leningrad, 1962).

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and the publication and translation of texts and monographs published there.

The outgrowth of this interest has been the increased number of exchange visits arranged between geographers of the United States and Britain and those of the Soviet Union. In addition, Soviet geographers now take part in the activities of the International Geographical Union and have been accepting invitations to lecture at various Western universities. They have taken an active interest in the work of Western geographers and have recognised the value of much of their research. V. A. Krotov, of the Institute of Geography of Siberia and the Far East, recently returned from an exchange visit to the United States and wrote, 'Although in a methodological respect, American geographical science is behind that of the Soviet, it should be noted that in the solving of systematic questions, particularly in the practical application of the results of geographic investigations, it is not behind the geography of the Soviet Union, and in some ways (the application of mathematical methods and use of statistical materials and others) it is ahead. The experience of the work of American economic geographers in the application of quantitative methods in geographic investigations, in city planning, the development of road networks, complex study and development of plans for the reconstruction of the economies of backward regions and other questions, merits serious attention and perhaps partial use in the Soviet Union.'[6] As Krotov points out, the use of quantitative techniques in Soviet geography is not well developed, but a trend is beginning. There have been a few experiments with linear programming in economic geography at Moscow University in conjunction with the computation centre of the State Economic Council.[7] At the university, however, there is not one course in quantitative techniques for economic geographers; the vast majority of research is conducted without their use. When one considers that the roots of many of these techniques lie in the work of the mathematician Kantorovich, such a lack appears even more startling.

AS in the case of most other fields of endeavour in the Soviet Union, geography has undergone adjustments and a re-examination since the death of Stalin. An angry verbal battle is now being waged over the 'dualism' of Soviet geography. The proponents of change maintain that the present separation between physical and economic geography represents a wide and harmful gap in the discipline which retards progress towards truly integrated research. They maintain further that this split will lead eventually to the break-up of geography into its fields of specialisation, which will be absorbed by such disciplines as

[6] V. A. Krotov, 'Prakticheskoe znachenie geograficheskoi Nauki v SShaA', *Dokladi Instituta Geografii Sibiri i Dalnego Vostoka*, No. 1, 1962, p. 14.

[7] See Soviet Geography: *Review and Translation*, March 1963, for V. Mikheyeva, 'An Economic Mathematical Model of the Location of Farm Production in Regions of the Soviet Union'; May 1961, A. M. Ryabchikov, 'Recent Tendencies in the Development of Geography at Moscow University'.

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economics and geology. They advocate the drawing together of the two divisions into a more unified programme which has been labelled 'monism', or the monistic concept of geography. Their opponents, who approve the present dualistic approach to the field, believe that the unification of physical and economic geography would mark a return to the anti-Marxist school of determinism. They argue that the physical environment is controlled by a set of natural laws and the economic environment by a set of social laws, precluding an integrated or unified approach. The concept of a total geographical environment which includes both nature and society is unacceptable to them.

This controversy had been smouldering for some time but was precipitated and heightened by the publication of V. A. Anuchin's book, *Teoreticheskie Problemi Geografii* in 1960.[8] Anuchin, a comparatively junior man in Soviet geography, states in the introduction to his book: 'Without pretending to offer an exhaustive solution to the basic theoretical problems of contemporary geography, the author hopes that his book will in some measure promote the creation of a monistic concept in geographical science'. In 1961 Anuchin submitted his book as a doctoral dissertation to the geography faculty of Leningrad University, where it was unanimously rejected because 'it did not meet the requirements of a doctoral dissertation'.[9] In June 1962 the book was submitted to the geography faculty of Moscow University, where it failed by three votes to receive the required two-thirds majority of the doctoral committee, numbering forty-nine.[10]

Even at the time of the book's initial publication, the ideas and concepts it advanced met hostile reactions from many members of the profession, particularly the physical geographers. Support for Anuchin and the idea of a unified geography was given primarily by economic geographers; the main centre of support is the Kafedra of Economic Geography at Moscow University. The arguments of the two opposing groups have grown loud and are marked by accusations and political name-calling. A. O. Konstantinov, of the Herzen Institute of Pedogogy, said at a discussion of Anuchin's book in the Geographical Society in Leningrad that it 'must be considered harmful'. 'Public condemnation of Anuchin's book would help to unmask it as unscientific and anti-Marxist'.[11] In a volume of essays dealing with methodological problems of economic geography, Feygin, an economist, writes; 'We thus have only a very limited number of economic geographers, mainly members of the geography faculty of Moscow University, who come out against assigning the status of an independent economic science to economic geography. The question arises, why do some members of the geography

[8] For a fuller discussion of the content of Anuchin's book see David J. M. Hooson, 'Methodological Clashes in Moscow', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, December 1962.

[9] 'Report on a Discussion of Anuchin's Book', *Soviet Geography: Review and Translation*, December 1961, p. 32.

[10] Yu. Saushkin, 'Anuchin's Doctoral Dissertation Defence', ibid. January 1963, p. 59.

[11] 'Report on a Discussion of Anuchin's Book', ibid. December 1961, p. 24.

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faculty of Moscow University, who regard themselves as Marxists, stand up for a concept that is incompatible with the Marxist classification of sciences and with Marxist philosophy?' [12]

On the other hand, those in agreement with Anuchin and the concept of a unified geography are equally vociferous. N. N. Baransky, a respected Soviet geographer, stated during Anuchin's dissertation defence at Moscow University: 'We would have been very happy if such books had appeared not now, but 10, 15, or 20 years ago. I extend my best wishes to this trend in the future.' [13] Yu. Saushkin, head of the Kafedra of Economic Geography at Moscow University, recently replied to criticism of his praise for Anuchin's book in an article for an American journal: 'The letter shows an extremely low level of scientific criticism and the fact that some geographers still have not rid themselves of the rough methods of unsubstantiated accusations and intimidation used in the period of Stalin's personality cult'.[14] Anuchin defended himself adroitly in a review of a collection of essays in economic geography cited earlier. He writes: 'Does this volume of articles have any positive significance? Or did the publishers commit an error in putting out the book? We think that the book should have been published. It is useful in collecting in one place the entire "bouquet" of old leftist ideas. Now there is no need any more to go back to the literature of the 1930s to get an idea about the substance of the leftist concept in economic geography. This book will not have the influence that similar writings had at the time of Stalin's personality cult. Times have changed and people have changed.' [15]

Times have indeed changed. The argument sparked off by Anuchin's book attacks a number of fundamental concepts in Soviet geography. The definition of the 'geographical environment' is being re-examined, and the need and immediacy of exclusively practical geographical research is being questioned. Not only is the relationship between physical and economic geography under examination but also the relationship of geography to the other disciplines. It is important to note that the arguments of both sides are widely publicised and openly aired. It seems to me that the wide disagreement among Soviet geographers is not so important as the stimulus it has given to the profession.

* * *

Soviet geography has made and continues to make valuable contributions in the search for knowledge. The work of geographers in both physical and economic investigations has been prolific, and in many cases highly significant. Attention is now being turned towards more integrated, nomothetic research in place of descriptive and ideographic work. The

12 'Methodological Problems in Economic Geography', ibid. December 1963, p. 51.
13 'Anuchin's Doctoral Dissertation Defence', loc. cit., p. 59.
14 See, 'Letter of protest regarding Yu. Saushkin's Article in *Economic Geography*', ibid. No. 1, 1963, and 'Yu. Saushkin's Reply to a letter of Protest', ibid. October 1963.
15 V. A. Anuchin, 'A New Book with Old Ideas', ibid. December 1963, p. 93.

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introduction and continued development of quantitative techniques should aid the advance of this trend.

The work and philosophy of non-communist geographers is now attracting more attention and in some cases is being re-appraised, a further step in ending the isolation from each other of the geographers in the two political blocs. The greater number of professorial and student exchanges in geography is already evidence of this trend.

The present controversy in geography is indicative of the changes that are occurring within the profession. In the opinion of this author, this controversy represents something more than a state of discord in Soviet geography; it is a sign of professional health.


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# VIEWS AND REVIEWS

## THE GERMAN PROBLEM ONCE AGAIN

*Melvin Croan*

WRITING RECENTLY IN THE *New York Review of Books,* a well-known British historian of Germany concluded that 'even the Germans themselves are becoming as sick of the "German problem" as the rest of us'. This comment was intended as a back-handed compliment by the writer, in whose view—a view which has become comfortably conventional in both Britain and the United States—the overwhelming majority of West Germans are quite content to be about the apolitical business of *embourgeoisement,* and have come to regard the repeated protestations of their government concerning national reunification as so many tiresome platitudes, and to dismiss the tribulations of their brothers—or have they already become mere cousins?—under communist rule as of scant practical moment.

To leave matters there is, of course, both convenient and reassuring for those non-Germans who may well be 'sick of the "German problem"'. Yet such an assessment suggests either woeful ignorance or else a substantial misreading of the contemporary scene in West Germany. To be sure, most of the shibboleths of the Adenauer era on reunification, while still officially retained to the present day, no longer inspire much popular respect in the Federal Republic. Few of its citizens now expect that a 'policy of strength' and integration with the West will compel the Russians to abandon East Germany and thus permit reunification 'in freedom'. Indeed, this formula and a host of related official tenets have been increasingly subject to impious attack by many West Germans whom the cant of American social science would immediately classify as 'opinion leaders'. These developments by no means indicate apathetic acceptance of Germany's division. On the contrary, they have signalled a reawakened interest in the German problem.

Nothing would be more mistaken than to imagine that this reawakening of concern has been limited to certain habitual West German critics of every official doctrine and all established policy such as, say, the editors of the magazine *Der Spiegel.* Consider, for example, the case of the considerably more circumspect Hamburg newspaper, *Die Zeit.* In March 1964, three of its prominent editorial writers visited East Germany. Their reports betrayed deep anguish that the two parts of Germany should have grown so far apart from each other and urged that something be done about it immediately. The course of action they recommended, that of small steps to strengthen existing contacts between West and East Germany and wherever possible to establish new ones, led *Die Zeit* into a private diplomatic venture, an unsuccessful one as it turned out, aimed at securing a reciprocal exchange of newspapers for general public consumption.

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Even before that abortive venture, *Die Zeit* decided to bring out its reports and recommendations on East Germany as a small paperback book. Entitled, with appropriate pathos, *Travels in a Far-Away Country*,[1] the book enjoyed almost instantaneous popularity in the Federal Republic. High on the best-seller list during the summer and autumn of 1964, by late November it had climbed to first place in non-fiction. Yet its success was only symptomatic of a larger shift of public attitude. According to the scrupulously conducted West German public opinion polls, the issue of reunification, far from having permanently receded in the popular consciousness, has recently reclaimed its forfeited position of a decade or so ago as an issue of primary public concern. In short, at a time when the West Germans are engaging in their first truly serious postwar foreign policy debates over a number of meaningful options in relations with the West, the larger 'German problem', i.e. relations with the East, and especially with the communist regime in East Germany, has, for better or worse, come alive once again.

MANY OTHER SIGNS POINT to the new atmosphere of debate. For one thing, scholarly treatment of contemporary realities in East Germany has now become quite respectable. Not so long ago, aside from publications commissioned or subsidised by the Federal Ministry for All-German Affairs—some of them competent if narrow monographs, others betraying all too readily their partisan inspiration—there was only a scattering of dry-as-dust academic dissertations on predictably obscure topics. Now there has appeared in book form a formidable special number of the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* devoted entirely to East Germany. The very title of this special number [2] can be taken as one index of how rapidly cold war conventions are disappearing. In place of the usual designation, 'Soviet Zone', East Germany is called by its own official abbreviation, DDR, without so much as the cushioning quotation marks, an omission for which the volume's editor wastes few words in apology. Indeed, Peter Ludz, one of Germany's most promising younger social scientists, goes one step further and implicitly offers a fundamental challenge to previous thinking in his introductory reassessment of the phenomenon of totalitarianism. Although not uniformly satisfactory, this essay is a very stimulating attempt to analyse the sources and patterns of change in totalitarian political systems. Ludz's highly theoretical introduction is followed by five sections, each containing two or more separate essays, which deal with assorted East German themes: i.e., occupation and family, industry and enterprise, the school, university and research, ideology, and sociology and philosophy. Unfortunately, the static bias of so much contemporary sociological writing militates against any very penetrating treatment of the problems of adaptation, innovation, and change. Few of the contributors, whose papers vary greatly in interest and quality, really succeed in measuring up either to the subtle analytical challenge or to the dynamic guidelines suggested by the editor's introduction.

[1] Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, Rudolf Walter Leonhardt, Theo Sommer, *Reise in ein fernes Land* (Hamburg, 1964).

[2] *Studien und Materialien zur Soziologie der DDR*, Herausgegeben von Peter Christian Ludz (Köln and Opladen), 1964.

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Among the better contributions are the essay on East German sociology and social research, written by Ludz himself, and another on the role and function of cybernetics. Given the volume's wide coverage, one is surprised by the absence of any systematic or special treatment of the sociology of the party itself. This is a curious and regrettable omission and one that is only partly remedied by the excellent, comprehensive bibliography which is presented as an annex to the book.

Because of the specialised character of its material and the heavy academic garb in which it is cloaked, the volume will enjoy only a restricted professional readership. A more popular fate seems in store for Carola Stern's biography of Ulbricht,[3] the first and so far the only full-length study of the East German leader to be published in the West. As political biography, the book has appeared either too early or too late, depending on one's taste in such matters. Its primary function, one clearly intended by Miss Stern herself, will be to help deflate the West German popular image of Ulbricht as some sort of moral reprobate, evil genius, or both: a 'German Stalin', a 'red Hitler', or an even more disagreeable combination of the most sinister character traits of both. Far from being the devil incarnate, the Ulbricht who emerges from Miss Stern's biography turns out to be a consistently cunning political in-fighter, to be sure, but, much more important, a diminutive historical figure and an almost pathetic human being. The early chapters, easily the best in the book, trace the vicissitudes of Ulbricht's career as the youthful Marxist, the KPD functionary, the successful survivor of both Nazism and Stalinism, and the Soviet viceroy in postwar Germany. In the process of telling her story Miss Stern manages to clear Ulbricht of some far-fetched but widely believed charges of moral turpitude, involving his alleged procuring and keeping of prostitutes in Leipzig in 1919. She is also at pains to treat with maximum objectivity some as yet unclarified issues concerning the degree of Ulbricht's complicity in the KPD's decimation after 1933. Thus, on one particularly sensitive point, she concludes that none of the evidence available to her proves that Ulbricht was personally responsible for Stalin's failure to secure Ernst Thälmann's release from Nazi Germany. (This question, it should be added, is far from settled.) As for more recent times, Ulbricht's public and private life in office is credibly depicted as that of an embittered philistine who has reached the heights of success in a milieu that he instinctively recognises as hostile. In the man's ingrained bureaucratic mentality, his intolerant anti-intellectualism, and his unswerving obedience to totally amoral norms of personal survival, Ulbricht's biographer sees the natural defence mechanism of an extremely limited human being who otherwise could never have coped with the many political and social convulsions of his lifetime. That in his old age the East German leader should have presided over a limited measure of internal relaxation and belated de-stalinisation, occasions no particular surprise. For, as Miss Stern rightly observes, 'Ulbricht's communism has in its essentials always been a mirror of Soviet communism'.

[3] Carola Stern, *Ulbricht—Eine politische Biographie* (Köln and Berlin), 1964.

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TURNING FROM MISS STERN'S judicious biography to another newly published study, that of Ernst Richert,[4] is at once to appreciate the subtle distortions to which the more realistic assessment of the communist regime in East Germany currently being undertaken in the Federal Republic can give rise. Richert's book, a comprehensive treatment of virtually every aspect of the 'second German state', contains much information for readers both in West Germany and abroad. Moreover, it advances a point of view which, to say the least, is unashamedly provocative. To summarise briefly, Richert believes that the SED regime has discarded ideological militancy in favour of a pragmatic programme emphasising economic productivity. As he purports to see it, none other than Ulbricht himself has already presided over the liquidation of the 'communist revolution in the DDR'. Against the conventional wisdom long prevalent in the West, Richert enters a forceful brief for the Ulbricht dictatorship's political stability and economic progress, and seeks to buttress these contentions with some jarring hypotheses about the estrangement of the population from the West and the incipient rapprochement between the communist regime and East German society.

Parts of his book are of substantive merit, if only as a corrective to misconceptions about East Germany based on incomplete or outdated information. Yet he seriously weakens his overall argument by exaggerating it—one feels in order to gain the maximum in shock effect—to a point well beyond plausible conjecture, much less known fact. To venture a definitive pronouncement on the present state and future prospects of popular acceptance of a regime afflicted with as many handicaps as that of Ulbricht and company is to run the risk of being repeatedly proved wrong. In Richert's case, speculation about the East German regime's stabilisation is not exactly new. Indeed, his present argument is one which he first began to advance some years ago. To be more precise, he was expressing himself in this vein even before the frenzied campaign to collectivise agriculture in 1960 and the construction of the infamous Berlin Wall in 1961.[5] Can anyone deny that these actions so demoralised relations between the ruling party and the subject population as to have destroyed whatever tentative 'rapprochement' may have previously existed? For each of these actions, Richert now offers an ingenious explanation if not an outright rationalisation, making it appear unavoidable at the time and almost desirable in ultimate consequence. Of course, his views on the regime's stabilisation may in fact have greater validity today than they enjoyed in the recent past. But surely the major point must still be that the DDR's communist rulers are only partially masters of their own fate. Even if Richert is substantially correct about the nature of the regime's current domestic policies and popular reaction to them—and he is open to challenge on both points—the regime's stability depends not only on such purely internal factors, but also, perhaps in even greater measure, on external influences from both East and West.

[4] Ernst Richert, *Das zweite Deutschland. Ein Staat der nicht sein darf* (Gütersloh, 1964).
[5] See his article in *Die Neue Gesellschaft*, May–June 1960.

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In fairness to Richert, it must be said that he is fully aware of the latter point. Indeed, so great is his vested interest in his own stabilisation hypothesis that he intermittently polemicises against specific West German agencies and politicians—his favourite targets are the SPD *Ostbüro* and the eastern CDU-in-exile—both for propagating what he regards as an incorrect interpretation of life in East Germany and also, by implication, for presenting something of an external impediment to its further domestic 'normalisation'. More distressing, from a non-German point of view, is Richert's tendency to lay the blame for most of what is objectionable about the East German regime—from its very establishment as a 'state which ought not to have been' to its perpetuation of certain obsolescent Stalinist practices—on Western policy. With the advantage of hindsight nothing is easier than to criticise the West's handling of its relations with the Soviet Union, in Germany and elsewhere, during the early postwar years. But Richert is on very treacherous ground when he baldly asserts that there is absolutely no evidence that 'before 1953 or even 1955 the Russians would have with premeditation and on their own aimed for a separate Soviet Germany'. And he begs more than one knotty question of recent history by adding that 'for Ulbricht's dream [of a separate Soviet Germany] to be fulfilled required that the West [itself] create certain [necessary] preconditions'.

READ IN THE LIGHT OF such unqualified generalisations, Richert's study of internal developments within East Germany appears to be little more than elaborate scaffolding to support the present-day policy recommendations advanced in yet another controversial tract, Peter Bender's *Offensive Relaxation of Tensions*.[6] Going considerably beyond advocacy of 'small steps' as championed by influential segments of public opinion and endorsed, incidentally, by Willy Brandt, Bender calls for genuinely radical West German initiatives. German national unity, he believes, can be re-established only after the political consolidation of communist rule in East Germany. On the assumption that such a consolidation will facilitate internal evolution, i.e., a relaxation of the dictatorship, and that this may in turn permit eventual national reunification, he advocates an end to West German political warfare against the communist regime, the granting of extensive credits in order to strengthen the East German economy, and, inevitably, a readiness to grant the DDR full diplomatic recognition. All of this, needless to say, would entail a total reversal of some of the Federal Republic's most fundamental foreign policy tenets. Small wonder that Bender's little book should have delighted the editors of *Der Spiegel*, who immediately serialised major portions of it in their archly critical journal.

What can be said about the efficacy of proposals such as those advanced by Bender? Granted that the DDR's internal evolution is desirable from several points of view, it need not follow that the best way to assure it is to foster the regime's consolidation. Indeed, it is at least as plausible to argue that an uncompromisingly tough West German policy towards the DDR coupled with greater flexibility and imagination

[6] Peter Bender, *Offensive Entspannung—Möglichkeit für Deutschland* (Köln and Berlin, 1964).

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in dealing with the Soviet Union and the other European communist states might be better suited to bring about the desired changes in the German situation. Moreover, what is to guarantee that the conciliatory overtures towards the DDR urged upon the Federal Republic must necessarily result in a reconciliation between the two German states? And, finally, to invoke a familiar postwar German dilemma, is it possible to strengthen the stability of the DDR without simultaneously weakening the stability of the Federal Republic? Until the answer to this last question is an unqualified 'yes'—which for a number of reasons is far from being the case today—Bonn will continue to follow a policy of minimum risks to itself. Meanwhile, it is up to the British, the Americans, and all other non-Germans who will be affected by changes in Bonn's foreign policy to pay close attention to the public debate over these issues in the Federal Republic. But first they must rid themselves of the mistaken notion that the 'German problem' has somehow ceased to exist.

# RECENT SOVIET WAR NOVELS

*J. N. Westwood*

OF THE THREE NOVELS discussed in this review, by far the biggest in every sense is Simonov's *Men are not born Soldiers*. Gonchar's *Man and Arms* is of interest because its realistic attitude towards the horrors of the battlefield is far removed from the Cowboys and Indians stereotype of other Soviet war fiction. Baklanov's *South of the Main Offensive** is included to show that in the last decade even pedestrian works (which still predominate in the output of war fiction) are beginning to reflect the party's re-appraisal of the second world war.

Taking the last first; *South of the Main Offensive* is an almost plotless tale of the German counter-offensive in Hungary during the last weeks of the war. The hero, Belichenko, commands an artillery troop and has the conventional qualities expected of the fictional middle-ranking officer. The climax of the book is the successful extrication of his guns from encirclement, but the interest of the novel lies in its repeated implication that in war not everything is as it is painted, that heroes die unnoticed while cowards may be honoured, that promotion does not necessarily go to the most qualified, that Soviet bombers sometimes bomb friendly troops. Consider the reflections of the hero on encountering an abandoned Russian anti-tank position. After fighting a stiff rearguard action one of the two-man detachment has retired with his life, while the other has remained behind, knocked out an additional tank, and been killed. Nobody would ever learn of the heroism of this man, while his escaped comrade would probably get a medal. And yet Belichenko suspects (and in this he does depart from the old conventions

* **Soldatami ne rozhdayutsya.** Serialised in *Znamya*, Nos. 8–1963 to 5–1964; **Man and Arms.** Serialised in *Soviet Literature*, Nos. 7–8. 1961. Previous title was *The Black Summer*; **South of the Main Offensive.** London, 1963. First published in *Znamya*, No. 1, 1958.

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of the officer-hero) that he too in the given situation would have retreated before it was too late. As for the accuracy of Russian bombing '. . . Soviet bombers filled the sky with their droning . . . and, unable to see the ground, dropped their bombs close to Belichenko's position. Having accomplished this, they departed'. But it must be added that this is no revelation; the following scrap of dialogue between Red soldiers as two aircraft fly overhead appeared on the first page of Grossman's novel *The People Immortal*,

*They're ours.*
*No, they're German . . .*
*They're ours all right—where's my helmet!*

Although Baklanov was accused of 'Remarquism' in his subsequent *An Inch of Ground*, Gonchar's *Man and Arms* would better fit this epithet. In fact this novel might be described as a Soviet *All Quiet on the Western Front*, for its plot and attitude closely follow Remarque's work. The almost lighthearted patriotism with which the students volunteer for service, their rough handling by an anti-intellectual sergeant, the reactions as one by one their comrades are killed, their appropriation of a badly-wounded friend's new boots, are all paralleled in *All Quiet*. Their deaths are not the usual sanitary deaths died by fictional Soviet warriors, but are described in unheroic and occasionally repellent detail. Only Remarque's sympathy towards the enemy is lacking.

Gonchar admits that he waited a long time to write this novel. Only at the end of the fifties could he envisage producing a novel which would be a protest against the senseless destruction inflicted not so much by the fascists but by war itself. He shows that '. . . died the death of the brave' is merely a telegraphic euphemism to comfort the next-of-kin, camouflaging something which is neither heroic nor human. Hitherto Soviet writers have been careful not to enter into too much gory detail; Russian soldiers might be punctured, could shed blood, but were usually not smashed or torn to pieces, and dying was a quiet process. It is true that in Leonov's *Chariot of Wrath* a tank-man cynically describes how one can distinguish Germans from Hungarians and Rumanians by the different kind of squelch they make as the tank passes over them, but the noise made by squashed Soviet bodies is not mentioned. To a reader educated in the concept of the 'just' war Gonchar's work may come as a shock, for in its implications it approaches the anti-war novel.

In *Men are not born Soldiers* Simonov returns to Stalingrad, not the Stalingrad of his *Days and Nights* but of the encirclement and defeat of Von Paulus. Characters from his *Comrades in Arms* (1952) and *The Living and the Dead* (1959) re-appear in this work, including Sintsov, the army commissar whose tribulations following the loss in action of his party card are a main theme of the 1959 novel. *The Living and the Dead* exposed some of the myths which surrounded the Stalinist interpretation of the second world war. *Men are not born Soldiers* carries this debunking several stages forward. Although the author nowhere carries his criticisms further than did Khrushchev in 1956, the book confronts the ordinary Soviet reader with several new truths, some conveyed by implication, others directly. Fundamentally, the novel is a dramatised reassessment of Stalin; or rather, it puts forward the evidence, mainly negative, for such a reassessment.

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The action of the novel takes place on several planes: with a front line regiment, with a divisional H.Q., in the rear at Tashkent. This permits an examination of Stalin from several points of view. Three of the main characters have actually met him, and he himself makes an appearance towards the end of the book. This treatment of Stalin is notable not only for its critical and probing approach, but also because even in the most conformist of earlier war novels the Commander-in-Chief is accorded only fleeting mention. He rarely appears in person; in Civil War literature it is not until 1935 that Stalin is given an important role to play, as saviour of Tsaritsyn in Tolstoy's *Grain*. In second world war literature he is nearly always mentioned, depicted as a constant source of inspiration for the Red Army; his radio speeches are listened to attentively, his words printed in the newspapers are never used to roll cigarettes. Young soldiers dream of him and dying heroes say farewell to him—but only occasionally is he granted more than a few dutiful lines.

In *The Living and the Dead* a contrast was drawn between two commanders; one who had been released from concentration camp to fight in the war, and another who had received promotion after promotion by currying favour with the party and abandoning his purged friends. This theme is elaborated throughout *Men are not born Soldiers*, and the analysis involves not only Serpilin, the former ' enemy of the people ', but the effect at all levels of the purge, and of Stalin's relations with his commanders. Early in the book a junior commander, aptly named Barabanov, the type of officer who masks his incompetence by displays of personal bravery and recklessness, gets drunk and leads his men into an unplanned, unsuccessful, and costly attack. After sobering up and being recommended for court-martial he shoots himself, thus compounding his guilt. The point is made that this officer owed his position to the patronage of the Army Commander, Batyuk. The latter is himself a mediocre officer whose own appointment depends on the favour of Stalin; he was spared the fate of Tukhachevsky and the other purged officers before the war, and, unlike other more capable officers, was neither removed nor executed after the disasters of 1941. Stalin is shown as tolerating this man precisely because of his mediocrity.

Even as early as 1944, when he wrote *Days and Nights*, it was clear that Simonov, like other war correspondent-novelists, was indignant because Russian lives were thrown away by incompetent and reckless leadership. In that novel, however, he concentrated his anger on a comparatively junior officer who made repeated frontal attacks on strong positions, relying for success on sheer weight of numbers. In *Men are not born Soldiers* the blame is shown to lie not simply on junior officers, but on Stalin himself. His own conduct of operations sets a bad example and officers appointed under his direct or indirect protection imitate his indifference to casualties. Thus Barabanov wastes men at company level, Batyuk is ready to sacrifice infantrymen for the glory of relieving Stalingrad a few hours sooner, and Stalin is implicitly involved in a similar incident: a commander is removed because his plan of attack, although likely to produce a bloodless victory, would not capture a key objective in time for the Red Army Day celebrations.

Injustices suffered by commanders are also recalled by Serpilin's reminiscences of 1941, and of the extraordinary suicide rate of Soviet

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officers. Since in 1941 retreating officers were being summarily shot, the only alternative to suicide was surrender, and not all were willing or able to take this option. (An even more outspoken indication of the Soviet commander's lot is given in one of Kazakevich's last works, *By Light of Day*: '. . . Listen, Colonel. You see height 61.5? You'll capture it tomorrow morning. If you take it you'll be . . . a Hero of the Soviet Union. If you don't you'll be shot.')

Different people in Simonov's novel have different opinions of Stalin, and this is the only issue on which Serpilin is split from his wife. She believes that Stalin was not responsible for the purge of her husband, it was either a mistake or the work of other, hostile, persons. Serpilin thinks otherwise; he has friends still in the prison camp whom he knows to be loyal, and was himself freed only because a highly-placed friend interceded with Stalin. He is unable to convince his wife, but in fact does not try very hard because even with one's wife one does not exchange opinions about Stalin too often or too deeply. This reluctance to discuss the man openly is shown elsewhere; Sintsov asks another officer what he thinks of Stalin, and whether he wants to live after the war as he did before, only when intimacy is forced on the pair by a prolonged bombardment; Serpilin's friend, who, as a member of the *Stavka*, sees Stalin frequently and obviously suffers from the encounters, criticises his strategy at length without mentioning his name—he indicates whom he is talking about simply by pointing towards heaven.

Serpilin's own feelings are mixed. He cannot forget 1941, but suspects that Stalin's iron will may be necessary for victory. However, he does ask himself where iron will ends and iron-clad obstinacy begins. Towards the end of the book he meets Stalin, to ask for the release of an officer still in concentration camp. (Stalin promises to look into the matter, but it is made clear that he has no intention of doing so.) In this section the Commander-in-Chief is described both physically (moving around silently like a cat, smaller than his pictures suggest, spine-chilling eyes) and psychologically. He is shown as absolutely pitiless, deciding the fate of men as he stares at their backs as they leave, not visiting the troops because deep down he fears people and in any case does not really like Russians; he has a consuming but small-minded interest in the details of army uniforms.

There is an interesting paragraph describing his bitterness towards Churchill and Roosevelt, who get the better of him at Big Three meetings. This is not simply because it is two against one, but because Stalin is psychologically, if not mentally, unfit to cope with this pair of smooth operators. Simonov's treatment of the Allies, however, remains true to form. Even if the usual cynical references to American tinned meat (called 'Second Front' by the Russian soldier) are missing from this novel, there is the stereotyped passage describing the eagerness with which the ordinary Red soldier awaits the repeatedly-postponed Allied landings.

But while the attitude towards Allied policy remains unchanged, in recent novels there has been a complete reversal of the treatment accorded western equipment supplies. Until recently it was customary to belittle both their significance and their quality. For example, Polevoi in one of his works contrasts the expectations of a squadron awaiting

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the arrival of British Hurricane fighters with their disappointment when the machine proves inferior to the Russian aircraft they are supposed to replace. But in 1961 Kazakevich's *By Light of Day* included a reference to 'those American boots that never wear out', and Simonov in his latest novel continues this rehabilitation process. The night flights carrying munitions and priority passengers between Moscow and the front are described as Douglas DC-3 operations, and a new Studebaker truck is not only praised by its driver but is actually depicted overhauling a panting line of Soviet-built vehicles. The other side of this coin is yet another oblique criticism of Stalin's failure to prepare Russia for the war; the technical inferiority of Soviet-made equipment. This theme appeared in Soviet war literature well before 1963. In *The Living and the Dead* a tank officer condemns the Voroshilov tank (more an incinerator than a fighting vehicle). Gonchar in *Man and Arms* refers to the bright new rifles issued in 1941 which refused to function if touched by dirt or water. In *Men are not born Soldiers* Simonov extends the catalogue of Russian deficiencies to fighter aircraft which were slower than German bombers, and to the thick field telephone cables which had to be laid from an enormous and conspicuous drum. This latter shortcoming, apart from inflating the signallers' casualty list, is blamed by implication for the poor communications and hence inferior command system in the Soviet front lines.

SEVERAL OTHER ISSUES are touched by *Men are not born Soldiers*; officers using their uniforms as a cover for black market operations, the existence of 'good' Germans, hungry workers dying at the factory workbench in Tashkent. None of these themes is entirely new, nor is Simonov's treatment of the commissar question. The latter, however, is so much involved in the development of the Soviet war novel that the latest tendencies warrant attention. Strictly speaking, commissars disappeared in 1942, when the disastrous dual command which caused so much chaos in 1941 was theoretically ended by transforming the commissar into a deputy commander (political)—the *Zampolit*. By 1942 the reputation of these political officers was deservedly and abysmally low, so one of the first duties of the novelist at this time was to reassert the wisdom, courage and necessity of the *Zampolit*. Thus in Grossman's *The People Immortal* of 1942 the main hero is Bogarev, a political officer who is human yet almost superhuman, all-knowing, all-seeing, brave and understanding, loved by his men and helping his commander to improve himself. He does not skulk in the rear (as many *Zampolits* did) but prefers to join in the infantry assaults, waving his automatic in one hand and his party card in the other.

Subsequent fictional commissars followed this pattern. Only for a brief period in the mid-fifties were the political officers depicted unfavourably. Thus, in Kazakevich's *The House on the Square* (1955) the hero (an entirely perfect Soviet officer) becomes the victim of a witch-hunt instigated by the *Zampolit*, makes a completely unfounded confession, and is saved only by good fortune. In Alekseyev's *The Inheritors* the *Zampolit* is ridiculed for trying to deliver political talks in the middle of a mock atomic attack, and for talking of 'sabotage' and 'rotten elements' when any small thing goes wrong. However, after the demotion of Zhukov, literary attacks on the *Zampolits* died out, but

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Simonov in both his latest novels again suggests that everything was not perfect on the political side of army life. While the majority of his political officers are shown to be more or less competent and useful, he also portrays the occasional black sheep. In *Men are not born Soldiers* there is one bureaucratic *Zampolit* who spends most of his time in the rear, making trouble for the front line commanders.

While recent Soviet war novels are certainly more outspoken than previous works, it is not because authors have become more bold. In effect what is happening is that the novel is being used to bring home to the ordinary Russian reader what Khrushchev revealed to the party in 1956. The novelists rarely go further than this; their new look at the war is really only a new look at Stalin. Nekrasov's unheroic depiction of 1941 in his *In the Stalingrad Trenches* (1948), and Kazakevich's attack on the chaotic command of the same year and on the arbitrary executions of good officers in *Two on the Steppe* (1948) were, in the circumstances of the time, more revolutionary than the latest novels. And in the depiction of Soviet characters no hero like Panova's Kramin in *Fellow Travellers* (1946) has appeared in recent novels (this wounded officer, a sybarite with a glamourous wife, when asked why he volunteered, replies: 'I'm a wealthy man . . . I went to defend my riches'). That these three books were harshly criticised, and one was banned, only emphasises that so far as war literature is concerned Khrushchev's reforms have merely made conformity easier.

# KPD AND COMINTERN

*Helmut Gruber*

ALTHOUGH A VAST LITERATURE on the Comintern has appeared in the twenty-five years which have elapsed since the publication of Franz Borkenau's impressionistic *Communist International*, surprisingly little of it has been concerned with the national communist parties or with the early years of the organisation. The two books under review * help to fill this lacuna in scholarship. The first, by Werner T. Angress, is a history of the German Communist party (KPD) during its '*Kampfzeit*' from the Spartacist uprising in January 1919 to the abortive 'German October' of 1923. The second, by James W. Hulse, surveys the first year of the Communist International up to the second world congress against the background of communist development in individual European countries.

Why, Angress asks, did the KPD fail to carry out a successful revolution between 1919 and 1923 when the after-effects of military defeat and revolution, economic dislocation, political instability, and an unpopular peace treaty appeared to create the conditions favourable for its realisation? In answering this question he discusses the development of the KPD and its relationship with the trade unions and other

* Werner T. Angress, **Stillborn Revolution: The Communist Bid for Power in Germany, 1921–1923.** Princeton U.P. 1963. 513 pp. James W. Hulse, **The Forming of the Communist International.** Stanford U.P. 1964. 275 pp.

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left-wing parties, and analyses the steps by which the party was Bolshevised and subjected to Russian domination. More than one-third of the book is a masterful review of the KPD's activities up to the ill-starred March Action of 1921. By careful sifting of the evidence and by an unusually balanced appraisal of recent scholarship, Angress gives a lucid account of what until now has been a welter of confusing data and piecemeal attempts at clarification. Particularly valuable is his treatment of the March Action itself, with its careful chronology, revelations about the activities of Max Hoelz, Hugo Eberlein, and Bela Kun, and exposition of the controversy between Paul Levi and the KPD *Zentrale*.

In the major portion of the book Angress displays an unusual gift for impartial and close analysis; the wealth of his documentation, including new material from the German Foreign Ministry, the Stresemann papers, and the *Reichskabinett-Protokolle*, at no time slows the pace or diminishes the interest of this skilful account. Here he is concerned with the futile attempts to establish a united front in Germany, ending in the misfired uprising of October 1923. The KPD 'acted from a desire to reconcile two essentially irreconcilable aims: acquisition of greater influence over the labor movement, and unremitting pursuit of the party's revolutionary ideals' (p. 243). Throughout 1922 the moderate Brandler *Zentrale* favoured the first course and the left wing under Fischer and Maslow the second, and the party was put in the ridiculous position of alternately wooing and repelling labour organisations.

1923 was a year of missed opportunities for the German communists. By August, Angress maintains, the most favourable moment for revolution had passed. 'Brandler, Radek, and the majority of the *Zentrale* members were not convinced that the KPD could make a successful bid for power [without] a reasonable assurance of substantial mass support' (p. 368). The KPD leaders were unwilling to risk another March fiasco. But the Russians had illusions about conditions in Germany, seeing there an analogy between their own October of 1917 and a 'second October' in Germany. When Brandler arrived in Moscow in September, to be briefed on the course of action and converted by the optimism of his mentors, illusions about German conditions were at their zenith. It was commonly believed that twenty million proletarians stood poised for battle (though the KPD had demonstrated repeatedly in the past months that it was not a leading force in the labour movement); that the communist 'red hundreds' would be a match for the *Reichswehr* and police (although the latter numbered 250,000 and were superbly trained and heavily armed); and that working-class elements of the *Reichswehr* would refuse to defend the bourgeoisie (even though the soldiers were recruited from war veterans and rural youths whose nationalism made them enemies of the left). When the dénouement came on 21 October this bubble of illusion burst in the sea of reality.

At the end of his book Angress offers some provocative interpretations. He considers the isolation and ineffectiveness of the KPD the result of the decline in the quality of its leadership, exemplified by the contrast between the independence and single-mindedness of Rosa Luxemburg and the dependence and indecisiveness of her epigones.

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There are two serious flaws in this. First, Luxemburg's ideas and visions were not tested in political struggles. After the Spartacists' bid for power in January 1919, fear and distrust among the workers became the inheritance of her successors. Second, Luxemburg died before the Russians took virtual control of all other communist parties. Could the KPD leaders (or even Luxemburg, had she lived) have broken with Moscow and maintained the communist character of their party in isolation? Was the German party ever strong enough in those early years to permit its leaders to challenge Moscow's preponderance? Even Levi, the most astute of Luxemburg's disciples, was forced to concede (after 1921) that the KPD, representing only a minority of the German working class, could not stand out against the ideological and organisational power of Moscow. Angress justly holds the KPD itself largely responsible for its inability to gain a wide following among German workers because its policies were either sterile or so transparently opportunistic as to be self-defeating. But in all likelihood even a more realistic and reasonable approach to German labour would not have succeeded so long as the KPD remained revolutionary and the working class remained reformist. The split in German labour was, much more than Angress admits, a case of ideological irreconcilability.

Much in Hulse's book has been treated elsewhere but never in such a systematic and balanced way. The volume lacks the depth of analysis and richness of detail one expects to find in a comprehensive survey. This shortcoming can largely be explained by the dearth of good histories of national communist parties, such as Angress', or Joseph Rothschild's history of the Bulgarian CP.

Hulse argues that in the fifteen months before the second world congress the aims of the Comintern underwent substantial change. In the spring of 1919 the Bolshevik leaders believed that the triumph of communism in Europe was imminent, and devoted themselves to preparing the working class for revolution through propaganda. When these revolutions failed to materialise, they shifted their emphasis to organisation and sought to transform the Comintern into a network of control. Hulse develops this theme throughout his investigation of the left in various countries. Hungary receives particular attention because the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, he believes, was the first occasion when the Comintern acted as the final authority in interpreting a revolutionary situation, and because it gave rise to the tendency to seek explanations for failure in 'treachery'.

The chapter on left-wing communism is the most valuable. Here the author succeeds in demonstrating how the militant and anti-parliamentary extreme left of the movement was able to play a significant role in the national parties and influence the decisions of the Comintern. The left faction worked to undermine the building of communist mass parties through compromises with the non-communist left. Early in 1920 it won control of the West European Bureau, the branch organisation of the Comintern in Amsterdam, which it used to intervene in the factional struggles in Germany, France, and Britain. When the second world congress opened on 19 July 1920, neither Lenin's attack on left infantilism nor the closing of the West European Bureau had succeeded in subordinating the radical minority to the leadership of the Comintern executive.

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# FAREWELL TO REVOLUTION?

*Leonard Bushkoff*

THIS IS A BOOK * which I opened with a certain scepticism. Weighty, handsomely designed and printed, laden with scholarly paraphernalia, the work of a dozen authors, it had all the characteristics of one of those inconsequential symposia which the big foundations delight in sponsoring. I was mistaken. Beneath the academic-bureaucratic jargon (most of the authors have served in both fields), side by side with the irritating use of sets of esoteric initials (p. 271 holds exactly twenty), there is much insight, good sense, and concern with fundamentals. Above all, there is an extraordinary unity of purpose and outlook, for the lack of cohesion which characterises most symposia was checked at three preliminary meetings during which a general thesis was hammered out.

The issue raised is a grave one: what effects have the transformation of war by nuclear weapons, and of the world map by the end of empire, had on the current Soviet interpretation of Marxist and Leninist doctrines of revolution? Further, what is the present and future potential of world communism, viewed, not as an ideology or a protest movement, but as a political force intent on power? War and its consequences, the authors emphasise, have been prerequisites for communist victories in Eastern Europe, China, North Korea, North Viet Nam, and Russia itself. Only in Cuba has there been another avenue to the top. But war, even a 'limited' war is, as Raymond Garthoff argues in one essay, no longer regarded by the Soviets as a rational instrument of policy; the men of Peking, of course, feel differently. But what of guerrilla war, subversion, infiltration, the coup d'état, rioting and strikes, all instruments by which the communists presumably hope to seize power—particularly in those nations, often newly-independent, now in the throes of modernisation? The authors are sceptical regarding both Moscow's inclination to violence (which tends to push even the most neutralist of states towards the West) and, above all, the effectiveness of this method in all areas *not* directly contiguous to communist military power, though they recognise that the communists will not turn away from such easy targets as Cuba or, possibly, Indonesia.

The thesis is developed in nine analytical essays on communist revolutionary strategy: Eastern Europe in 1944–48 (brilliantly described by Richard Burks); Finland, 1918–1963, especially the period since 1945 (James Billington); South-East Asia—Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, and the Philippines—during 1942–1950 (an admirable synthesis by Ruth McVey); the Indo-Chinese peninsula, 1945–1962 (George Modelski); Korea, 1945–1962 (Glenn Paige); the Arab world, particularly Syria, Iraq, and Iran during the 1950s (persuasively handled by Manfred Halpern); Latin America since 1945, with emphasis on Chile, Guatemala, and Cuba (James Daniel); Sub-Saharan Africa over the past decade (William Lewis); and the prospects for communism in the countries of Asia (incisively presented by Thomas Thornton). Other essays survey the

* Cyril E. Black and Thomas P. Thornton (eds.), *Communism and Revolution*: The Strategic Uses of Political Violence. Princeton University Press and Oxford University Press, 1964. 467 pp. 80s.

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ideological roots of communist revolutionary doctrine, the communist experience with revolution up to 1939, and the modernising tendencies which, as Cyril Black ably points out, are disrupting traditional political attitudes and systems throughout the world.

If Moscow and its foreign subordinates have indeed rejected the use of war and revolution, it can be argued that the Third International and its descendants have, in a sense, followed the Second International to revisionism and, perhaps, stagnation. Will then the Chinese and their supporters, all those to whom Moscow's 'conservatism' is psychologically or ideologically unacceptable, be able to exploit the resulting vacuum to give leadership to the frustrated and discontented, in a new world revolutionary movement?

# JASNY THE PIONEER

*Alfred Zauberman*

IT IS A PLEASURE and privilege—says Professor Nove—to introduce a volume in honour of Dr Naum Jasny.* It is also a pleasure and privilege to review this volume, so admirably produced by Jane Degras and Alec Nove.

As becomes a *Festschrift*, quite a few of its essays move in Naum Jasny's own areas. From this angle Colin Clark's contribution is of considerable interest since it tries to relate Jasny's work to that of other students—in a wider perspective. It will be most revealing, I am sure, to those of us who remember the intensity of certain controversies, to find how relatively modest are the differences between Jasny's estimates of key elements in the process of Soviet economic growth and the appraisal by other eminent authorities, including the findings of Bergson in his monumental inquiry into Soviet real national income. As often as not it is the literary frame of Jasny's reasoning—so expressive of his personality—that might have given an impression of more marked disparities. One of his memorable expressions—recalled here by Clark—is the description of Soviet planning, in its initial phase, as 'bacchanalian', and in the present volume a careful target-by-target investigation by Holland Hunter helps to quantify for the reader this colourful adjective. It shows that indeed all targets in the early years were set beyond a feasible level; that there was more realism in later years (of the pre-1937 period), that overfulfilment became increasingly frequent, notably for items high up in Stalin's scale of preferences, at the expense of consumer-welfare items. Stalin stood for steel, and the behaviour of the steel index, I would say, was un-bacchanalian (Hunter is probably right in surmising that the use of some modern tools in the job, especially the input-output flow matrices, would in most cases bear out Jasny's shrewd insight). A truly striking glimpse of the climate of planning of the period—its bacchanalian and non-bacchanalian aspects—

* **Soviet Planning.** Essays in Honour of Naum Jasny; Jane Degras and Alec Nove Eds., Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1964, pp. XI + 225, 35s. net.

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is provided by Jack Miller's personal reminiscences from his stay with Gosplan's research institute in the mid-1930s.

Of other contributors Wiles analyses methods of international comparisons of Soviet economic levels and performance in a typically Wilesian fashion—(' If Bornstein and Galenson and Tarn and Campbell agree it does not mean that they are right. It is on the contrary quite certain that they are wrong. They have exaggerated the purchasing power of the ruble and the volume of Soviet production, by an amount unknown. . . . Mr Nutter could well be right, for the wrong reasons '). He stresses that all the calculations neglect differences in the range of choice: wider problems of welfare criteria in Soviet planning are discussed in a fundamental article by Michael Kaser.

As an *obiter dictum* Kaser reminds us that Jasny called the Soviet experience ' forty years of inability to develop forms of planning and a workable system of plans '. The statement clearly requires certain qualifications, but planning methodologies and techniques are not analysed in this volume. In an excellent essay Alec Nove hints at the possible development of a fully-fledged Soviet theory of planning integrally linked with input-output analysis and linear programming. He expresses his doubts whether such a theory would have much that is useful to say on the definition of objectives. Indeed, it will have nothing to say *directly* on this point, which is extra-economic: the role of mathematics is only to help towards clearer thinking, and of the computer—to accomplish this with fabulous speed: yet both may be important, among many other things, for the efficient relating of plans to objectives.

The space allotted does not permit doing justice to all the contributors. At least in passing I would like to mention a paper by Klatt—rather far from Jasny's field, but topical and interesting (on development aid for development's sake), and of course the concluding chapter on the addressee of this *Festschrift* at eighty; and to join its author (J. H. Richter) and the other contributors in their good wishes and congratulations to Naum Jasny the pioneer.

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## *Our Contributors*

FRANCOIS BONDY is the editor of the Paris monthly *Preuves*.

LEONARD BUSHKOFF teaches at the Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh.

F. L. CARSTEN, Masaryk Professor of Central European History in the University of London. His last book, *Reichswehr und Politik 1918–1933*, was published in 1964; an English version will be published at the end of 1965.

ESTHER COREY, formerly Professor of Russian and German at Antioch College, Ohio, is currently on the faculty of the Pratt Institute, New York.

MELVIN CROAN is an Assistant Professor of Government at Harvard University and an Associate of Harvard's Russian Research Center.

GEORGE J. DEMKO is Assistant Professor of Geography at Indiana University. Travelled extensively in the Soviet Union during the academic year 1962–63 under the sponsorship of the Inter-University Committee on Travel Grants.

MR. JOSEPH FREEMAN'S published work includes two novels, poetry criticism, memoirs (*An American Testament*) and a book about art and literature in the U.S.S.R.; on the staff of the American Civil Liberties Union and a founder and editor of *New Masses and Partisan Review*.

MANUEL GOMEZ, one of the founders of the Mexican Communist Party, lives in the United States.

HELMUT GRUBER, Associate Professor of History at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, is working on a study of *Communist Critics of the Comintern* and editing an anthology on *International Communism, 1919–1939*.

PHILIP E. MOSELY is Director of the European Institute of Columbia University; author of: *Russian Diplomacy and the Opening of the Eastern Question in 1838 and 1839* (1934), *The Kremlin and World Politics* (1960) and contributes to scientific reviews.

FRANK OSVALD is a free-lance journalist of Czech origin, who lives in Denmark. He is at present preparing a study on Eastern European culture since the death of Stalin.

EDGAR REICHMAN, Rumanian writer now living in Paris. His novel *Le Denonciateur* appeared in 1962.

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JORGEN SCHLEIMANN, Danish journalist and radio commentator and editor of the Copenhagen *Perspektiv*.

H. SCHURER, Librarian of the School of Slavonic Studies at London University since 1956, is the author of articles on Parvus, Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Pannekoek, published in recent years in various journals.

DR. J. N. WESTWOOD, until 1964 a lecturer in the Russian Department at McGill University, Montreal, is the author of *A History of Russian Railways* (1964).

ALFRED ZAUBERMAN is lecturer on Soviet Economics at the London School of Economics. His new book *Some Aspects of Soviet Economic Theory and Planning* is to appear soon.


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